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ABSTRACT

The aim of this book is to assist people who use interviewing as a means of gathering information. It is a practical guide to more effective techniques and provides methods relevant to a variety of contexts. After a review of the psychological bases of interviewing, the types of interview are discussed as follows: (1) personal data reporting; (2) opinion polls or sample surveys; (3) research interviews; (4) clinical interviews; (5) key informant interviews; (6) guided interviews; (7) focused interviews; (8) mass media interviews; (9) group interviews; (10) job interviews; (11) telephone interviews; and (12) combined methods. Ways of structuring the interview and techniques of interviewing are considered. Particular attention is given to non-verbal communication and how non-verbal communication cues can be used to facilitate the aims of the interview. Techniques are presented for handling difficult cases, when respondents are hostile, anxious, too agreeable, or unusual in other ways. Interviewing thorough an interpreter, and the interview as a research tool are also addressed. (SLD)

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Skilled Interviewing

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Preface

In producing this book for interviewers, I have drawn on the experience of using interviewing in research both in Australia and Asia and conducting training workshops for students in psychology at the University of Newcastle over several years. My thanks go to the many research assistants who have had the task of carrying out the interviews in these researches.

Here at Newcastle I have been particularly indebted to Patricia Duncan both for her support in the conduct of the interviewing workshops and for her assistance in the preparation of this manual. May I also express my thanks to Norman Kafer for contributing the chapter on non-verbal communication, which draws so well on his extensive research on the development of social skills in children.

I hope that users will find it a convenient and practical aid to their repertoire of interviewing skills and that it will help make the task of interviewing both a satisfying and rewarding experience.

DAPHNE M. KEATS

CHAPTER 1

Psychological Bases of Interviewing

Interviewing is part of the day-to-day activity of a wide range of occupations, especially those concerned with service to people. It is one of the most widely practised professional skills of psychologists. Others whose work requires the skills of interviewing include social workers, counsellors, personnel officers, therapists of various kinds, doctors, nurses, insurance sales staff, journalists, police officers, politicians, trade unionists, members of the legal profession, and many others. Interviewing skills are required whenever there is a person-to-person interaction in which information is exchanged. Even over-the-counter interactions between the public and office employees have the same interpersonal dynamics as occur in interviewing.

The principal mode of interaction is the spoken word, but non-verbal messages are also present, and other written materials can also be utilized in association with the oral mode. Most interviews are between two people, but there may be more than two. Usually the interviewer and respondent are both present, but an interview can also be conducted from a distance by telephone or by television hook-up. An essential condition in each case is that the exchange of information is immediate rather than delayed, and follows a question-and-answer pattern, with the interviewer asking most of the questions.

The aim of this book is to assist those people who use interviewing as a means of gathering information. It is designed as a practical guide towards more effective techniques and a better understanding of what is going on in this complex situation. The methods are relevant to a variety of contexts, and it is to be hoped that clinicians and counsellors, amongst others, will find them useful. One point must be made at the outset, however. This is not a substitute for a text on counselling technique — that is another field altogther.

Psychological Bases

Although interviews may have different purposes for which specific techniques are required, the dynamics of all interview situations are based on an underlying set of psychological forces which successful interviewing will take into consideration. Many good interviewers seem to do this intuitively, doing what they do because it 'works' in the situation, and relying on a natural sympathy and interest in people.

However, good interviewing ability is not just a gift; it requires skills — in speaking, listening, and understanding. Naturally sympathetic interviewers can become better interviewers, and diffident, arrogant, or inefficient ones can become reasonably skilled by a conscious study of how to apply methods derived from understanding and making use of the psychological bases of the interviewing relationship.

Many aspects of social psychology, personality, motivation, and information processing are involved. As yet this body of knowledge does not amount to what one could strictly call a 'theory of interviewing', but it is far more than a series of hints. Some of the basic concepts are summarized in the following sections. In later chapters we will see how to put these concepts to practical use in the development of interviewing skills.

Directional and Non-directional Interviews

Interviews fall into two main groups, those whose purpose is to change the behaviour of the respondent and those whose purpose is to collect information without the intention of affecting the respondent's behaviour. Typical of the first group are interviews by clinical psychologists, doctors, social workers, thera-

pists, counsellors, clergy, rural extension workers, and sales staff. In the second group are the opinion polls, the census and research interviews, interviews by journalists, by police officers attempting to establish the details of accidents and crimes, and interviews with job applicants by employers.

In the first group there is much emphasis on the interpersonal interaction between interviewer and respondent. There is often a mutually desired outcome, implicitly or explicitly expressed and understood, and one of the participants, the interviewer, has the role of assisting the other participant, the respondent, in attaining that outcome. In such cases the quality of the interaction between the interviewer and the respondent is an important factor in determining whether or not the goal will be achieved. This is most typical of the counselling or therapeutic interview.

In the second group the emphasis is on the collection and interpretation of the responses, irrespective of the subsequent behaviour of the respondent. The outcome is an ordered collection of information, and the respondent may take no further part in the task after providing the requested replies.

Interviews of the first kind generally do not occur singly, but are often conducted in the context of a therapeutic relationship which develops over time, either by the same interviewer or by others with a related concern for the client. In the second type the respondent may be interviewed on one occasion only. In this situation questions such as whether all the relevant information has been obtained, how reliable it is, how codable it is, and how suitable for analysis it is all become vital issues.

For interviews of this kind there may also be a number of respondents, all of whom are asked questions on a particular theme. Consistency amongst the interviewers if there is more than one, or by the one interviewer if there is only one, will be an important consideration. For such interviews a carefully prepared interview schedule is an essential tool because consistency in the questions must also be ensured.

Interviews as Communication Systems

An interview differs from a lecture, a speech, a mass questionnaire administration, and an ordinary conversation or dis-

cussion in that it is a directed conversation set up for the express purpose of eliciting information. It is the interviewer's role to do the eliciting. If the roles are reversed the respondent is conducting the interview.

Hence the interviewer is responsible for the direction the interview is to take. The direction is explicit in cases where a formal interview schedule is used, but may be implicit in other types. For example, the therapeutic or counselling interview can allow a great deal of variation in the course of a particular interview yet still retain an overall aim which is consistent with the global expectations deriving from the counsellor's particular theoretical orientation. Thus a counsellor with a non-directive orientation may allow a great deal more variation than a counsellor with a behaviourist orientation.

The communication system is a two-way system in which each responds to the other in a balanced relationship. It is not necessarily a system of equality. However, if the interaction does not allow one of the participants to feel satisfied that his or her opinions or information has been adequately listened to and understood, the resulting imbalance will cause the efficiency of the system to break down (Heider, 1958).

Dynamic Nature of Interviews

The communication system in an interview has the properties of an open rather than a closed system (Emery, 1981). The interview situation is not static but dynamic, and can lead to a variety of outcomes. As the respondent and the interviewer react to each other's questions and responses, changes occur in cognitive structures, in motivation, in attitudes, and in affective relationships.

Obviously change is more likely in interviews of the first type but, even when a set schedule of questions is to be rigidly adhered to and there is no intention to create change, many variations actually occur. Variations in wording have been frequently observed in studies of interviewer reliability (Belson, 1981). Also the active participation of the interviewer can have the effect of bringing the interviewer's attitudes to the topic being discussed more in line with those of the respondent. This

process has been demonstrated in studies of attitude change using role playing (e.g. Janis & Mann, 1965).

As the interview proceeds, and responses to questions lead to further questions and responses, a communication network of interrelated questions and answers develops. This network can vary greatly in form and complexity, from a simple chain to a complex system with branching subsystems and feedback loops. Such a system can be planned in an interview schedule, or may arise as result of responses and probing.

Cognitive Aspects of Interviewing

Interviewing brings a number of cognitive processes into play — for example, observation, memory, logical inference, concept acquisition, categorization, and reciprocity. The interviewer must be constantly categorizing, reviewing and evaluating what the respondent says, looking for the relations among responses given in earlier and later stages of the interview, and shaping successive questions accordingly. The respondent may do likewise, shaping responses according to his or her interpretation of the interviewer's intentions and reactions to previous responses.

Empathy, being able to see the situation from the other's point of view, is one of the most important skills for interviewers to develop. It is largely a cognitive skill, based on concepts of reciprocity and learning to understand the role of the other (Hoffman, 1976; Piaget, 1932; Selman, 1976). It is essential for understanding and interpreting responses at any level of complexity.

The processes of assimilation and accommodation, which Piaget (1950) has shown to be essential to the cognitive restructuring in concept acquisition, are both present in interviewing. The interviewer must also beware of premature closure (Lunzer, 1973), i.e. coming to a conclusion before all the relevant data have been taken into account. Thinking of the formal operational kind (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958) is essential to coping with the number of likely variables.

An ability to develop flexible categorization systems (Rosch, 1977) is also important. The effective interviewer has to develop the attitudes required in creative thinking — flexibility,

fluency, originality, and elaboration (Guilford, 1959) — and be divergent rather than convergent in thinking.

To deal with feedback loops and complex communication networks the interviewer also has to remember what was said previously. Without accurate observation as a basis logical inferences cannot be drawn.

The interviewing situation is therefore one that places quite heavy demands upon the cognitive skills of the interviewer. It produces changes in cognitive structure for both interviewer and respondent as these categorizing, remembering, evaluating, and inferring processes are brought into play.

Development of Affective Relationships

It is important to remember that the interview is an interaction between two persons. Thus an affective relationship develops between the interviewer and the respondent. Most people in two-way interactions wish to be perceived favourably by the other person and give out signals that they wish to be liked. These signals are most effective when they also indicate that the person wishes to like the other (Argyle, 1983; Kafer, 1981, 1983).

We use both verbal and non-verbal signals to communicate our interpersonal attitudes. However, attitudes and emotions are often conveyed more easily by our non-verbal behaviour (Argyle, 1983). Thus we infer the nature of the affective relationship from such cues as facial expressions, eye gaze, body posture, and gestures. The type of affective relationship that develops is closely linked to the way the interviewer and the respondent interpret the non-verbal signals emitted by the other.

If the relationship between the respondent and the interviewer is perceived as hostile the purpose of the interview will not be achieved. Unfavourable affective relationships lead to unwillingness to respond, brusqueness of manner, forgetting, inability to organize thoughts, unwillingness to elaborate, and inattention on the part of the respondent. If the interviewer feels antagonistic to the respondent there can be a failure to follow up details, and abruptness of style, resulting in a curtailed and unsatisfactory interview. Another probable outcome

is the adoption of aggressive interviewing techniques, in the style of a legal adversary, which is just as likely to produce aggressive, hostile, distorted, and limited responses as it is to produce the 'truth'.

Both respondent and interviewer are influenced by the affective relationship that develops. The interviewer needs to be aware of the nature of that relationship and must control for its effects in such a way as to maximize the desirable outcomes and reduce the undesirable. Affective relationships are a potential source of bias. Problems arise when the need to be liked overrides the need to obtain or give information. The result can be bias in the content of either the questioning or the responses.

Social Facilitation and Politeness Norms

In every social and cultural setting norms develop which we can term politeness rules. Such rules provide a recognized framework of behaviour which facilitates social interaction. Because of such rules people may operate smoothly and comfortably in a wide variety of different social contexts, even though they may not have favourable affective relationships with those with whom they come into contact. Politeness rules are often so well known in a particular culture that adults are hardly aware of operating within them until the rules are transgressed.

There are politeness rules for a host of verbal interactions, for opening a conversation, for appropriate forms of address, for the use of facilitators such as 'please', 'thank you', and 'may I', for introducing oneself to a stranger. There are politeness rules also for non-verbal behavioural interactions, for example in the use of eye contact (Argyle & Dean, 1965) and the interpretation of body position (Argyle, 1975) and interpersonal distance (Sommer, 1969). An effective interviewer must be sensitive to such rules and know how to use them correctly and correctly interpret their use by others.

However, there are many socially and culturally based variations in such rules. For instance, one does not introduce a topic of any kind in a farm environment without first making some reference to the amount of rain that has, or more probably has not, fallen. This is still a common opener in the city,

but it would hardly matter if some other device was used. Cultural differences abound. For example, in Western cultures to look a person directly in the eye may be interpreted as an indication of honesty, forthrightness, or concern for the other person but in some Asian cultures it would be regarded as quite rude to stare so directly into another person's face.

Doubtless every society has its arbiters of etiquette and its rigid conformists as well as its flouters of social rules, and allowance must be made for individual variation within the system. The interviewer therefore must recognize the signs which the respondent so quickly displays and adopt acceptable politeness norms appropriate to both interviewer and respondent.

Effects of Social Context

Interviews do not take place in neutral contexts but in behavioural settings in which both the interviewer and the respondent have recognizable behavioural roles. Barker (1968) has described the ways in which the characteristics of the behavioural setting affect behaviour. For example, there is likely to be a difference in a respondent's attitudes if interviewed in the street or other public place, in his or her own home, or in the interviewer's office.

These context differences can affect the respondent's attitudes to the interviewer in various ways. A woman respondent may feel more secure and in greater control if interviewed in her own home but in the interviewer's office may feel out-of-place and unimportant. Hence her memory for details and the fluency with which she expresses her ideas may be affected. Similarly, if a person is accosted by an opinion pollster in a busy street, the responses to the questions may have as much to do with resentment at being singled out in public (or a feeling of self-importance for the same reason) as with the opinions held — whether they be about the current political scene or the relative merits of different brands of jam or tomato sauce.

On the one hand a knowledge of the likely effects of social context may prevent some problems from arising, on the other it is clear that the deliberate manipulation of context effects is also possible. Whether intended or not, their influence upon the course of an interview may not be inconsiderable.

Social Roles

Effects of social context also interact with effects arising from the role expectations (Biddle, 1979) of the interviewer and the respondent. For various reasons, what a wife and husband say to each other about their solvency will be very different from what they might say to their bank manager on the same subject; what the young job applicant says to the interview panel may differ from what he says to his friends about his interests and abilities; how the patient describes a pain to his doctor is likely to be somewhat different from his complaint to his wife, his union representative, or his drinking pals — he may not mean to distort, he probably may be trying quite earnestly to give a coherent explanation, yet the role expectations will elicit certain styles of responding.

These differences in expectations are made even more complex when there are substantial discrepancies between interviewer and respondent in socioeconomic status, education, and age and in some instances when they are of the opposite sex.

Levels of Response

In most interviews two levels are present in the responses, the rational, or 'face value' response present at the superficial level, and the indications of the emotional needs, present at the subconscious level for most of the time but only occasionally emerging at the surface. The latter show themselves in various tension-reducing mechanisms, in forgetting, in bias in reporting, in attributions of causality, and in a variety of behavioural mannerisms indicating anxiety, withdrawal, involvement, enthusiasm, etc.

Clinical interviews mainly deal with the second level, while surveys and research interviews deal mainly with the first. However, both levels will be present in either kind of interview. Both are particularly important in opening up the interview and attempting to establish rapport with the respondent. The interviewer should know to what degree the emotional level should be probed, as its relevance will vary according to the purpose of the interview.

Interaction of Facilitating and Inhibiting Psychological Forces

In interviews of all kinds, both facilitating and inhibiting psychological forces are present. They generally do not occur separately but in interaction with each other. The skilled interviewer maximizes the facilitating forces and overcomes the inhibiting forces.

Facilitating forces include:

- Social norms of acceptability and politeness
- Courtesy
- Demonstration of shared interests
- Relevance of issues
- Expectations of needs being met
- Cathartic effects of revelation
- Intellectual satisfaction from cognitive synthesis and reorganization
- Seeing problems in a new light
- Personal attraction
- Lack of interruptions
- Appropriate choice of time and place
- Acceptable role expectations
- Appropriate, understandable language modes

To overcome the influence of inhibiting forces, the interviewer must first recognize their presence. Inhibiting forces include:

- Anxiety
- Cognitive disorganization
- Bewilderment
- Lack of understanding of issues
- Inability to recall
- Poor verbal facility in comprehension or expression
- Emotional involvement precluding rational consideration of issues
- Rejection of interviewer on personal grounds
- Inappropriate choice of time and place
- Lack of relevance of issues
- Confusion in role expectations

Tension-reducing Mechanisms

Tension-reducing mechanisms can be facilitating as well as inhibiting. Some facilitating mechanisms used by the interviewer are attention to the social context to create a comfortable environment for the respondent, showing empathy and understanding, and spending time at the beginning of an interview to develop rapport. These will be dealt with in later chapters.

However, respondents may employ tension-reducing mechanisms as a defence, especially at the beginning of an interview or when the second level is probed. These are listed in Table 1.

Problems in the Use of the Interview

The subjective factors in the interviewer–respondent relationship are the principal sources of problems in the use of the interview as a research tool. In therapeutic interviews these relationships may become so powerful as to affect the therapeutic program. It is often difficult to judge whether favourable changes occur because of the action taken or because of characteristics of the interviewer or counsellor.

Often the use of interviews is rejected in research in favour of questionnaires on the ground of the interview's being

Table 1 **Tension-reducing Mechanisms**

Mechanism	Example
Withdrawal	The respondent misses the appointment.
Aggression	The respondent slams the door in the interviewer's face.
Rationalization	The respondent is too busy because she has a cake in the oven.
Projection	The respondent finds fault with the interviewer's organization.
Repression	The respondent agrees to the interview but does not open up in response to the questions; answers are bland, lacking depth.
Repression in memory loss of unpleasant data	The respondent cannot recall details of a traffic accident although apparently conscious at the time.

insufficiently objective. Questionnaires are faster to administer and present the same questions in the same form to all respondents, and the responses are easy to understand and easier to analyse than interviews. If well-constructed they are a very economical way of obtaining information from a large number of people. The argument most often advanced against using interviews is that because respondent and interviewer affect each other the changes of attitude which are possible within the course of an interview and the interpersonal relationships which may develop interfere with accurate recall and willingness to give 'truthful' replies.

However, the use of the questionnaire also has its problems. It must rely entirely on the effectiveness of its format to cope with a wide variety of responses and respondents. In many cases respondents have difficulty fitting their 'true' answers into the response categories which have been provided. Many respondents to questionnaires also have difficulty encapsulating their thoughts into precise, brief wording, so they do not use the additional few lines sometimes set aside for qualifying answers or making comments. Often this opportunity is not even provided.

Both questionnaires and interviews depend on what the respondents say. In either case there is no guarantee of any congruity between what they say and what they do. The interview probably gives more opportunity than the questionnaire to explore the possibilities of a mismatch.

Interviewer variability is another potential source of difficulty. It has been studied extensively and various checks can be built into any large scale interviewing program such as opinion poll interviewing to offset the effects. For example, individual differences in interviewing style can be overcome by training and by the use of a large number of interviewers.

Other problems related to the reliability of data obtained from interviews are the sources of variability in the interview situation, the reliability of the recording of the responses, and the effects arising from the structure of the interview schedule, namely the form of the questions and the order in which they are presented.

Problems arise too in the question of whether interview data can be coded satisfactorily for analysis, and if so, how. The

main difficulties in coding are in setting up appropriate categorizing systems which will cover the range of responses adequately yet parsimoniously, and transposing responses into ratings, rankings, or even scores which can be given statistical treatment. One of the greatest problems is that the researcher generally wants to do justice to the uniqueness of individual responses and the wealth of data which interviews generate. There is often too much and too rich a vein of information for conceptualization.

Finally there are the problems of communication. Although sometimes difficult, most of these can be overcome by training, as later chapters will show.

The advantages of interviewing over other methods of asking questions are many. Interviews give information immediately which can be qualified or added to if necessary, they allow on-the-spot interpretations and reactions, they have flexibility, they can be warm and supporting as contrasted to the impersonality and disinterest of filling in forms and answering questionnaires. They can be used to supplement other means of gaining information. Perhaps most important of all they can be used when other methods will fail — with the sensitive, the difficult, the ego-involved, and people with the most complex of personal problems.

Suggestions for Further Reading

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CHAPTER 2

Types of Interview

The purpose of the interview and the methods used to structure its content and carry it out are closely related. In this chapter some of the most frequently used types of interview are reviewed. They vary in complexity, ranging from brief informal exchanges to prolonged in-depth clinical interviewing.

Personal Data Reporting

In structure and depth of probing the personal data report is the simplest type. These interviews are usually instrumental to another purpose. They are frequently accompanied by forms to be filled in recording personal data. The degree of formality may vary. Although the forms are often standardized the procedures are not.

This type of interview occurs frequently in dealings between members of the public and government servants, in over-the-counter interactions with office staff, with hospital admissions staff obtaining data on patients, and many other similar situations. A typical sequence in an interaction of this kind occurs when a client approaches a service counter with a request, is asked to fill in a form, goes back to the official at the counter, is asked further questions related to the information on the form, and finally receives the answer or is asked to pay the fee for whatever service was requested. This is an interaction most

Personal Data Reporting.

people engage in at some time or other. At times they may go away feeling frustrated and irritated, at other times they may go away with a sense of satisfaction, feeling that the person on the other side of the counter was both pleasant and efficient. They often do not realize that they have been in an interviewing situation, in one case conducted badly, in the other conducted well.

In psychology a frequent use of this type of interview is by

A door-to-door opinion pollster.

experimenters collecting background data on their subjects at the time of explaining what is required of them as subjects. It is essential in these cases that the data being asked for should be seen to be relevant by the subjects. If these requests and explanations are carelessly done with little concern for the subject, there are quite likely to be adverse effects upon the subject's motivation and performance in the subject role.

In all these examples the interviewing aspects of the interaction are secondary to the major purpose. Sampling depends on other demands, hence is not an issue in itself. There are no set methods of recording as the completed form is the record; tape recording is not usually considered necessary. Coding uses the precoded categories of the forms or of brief background data questionnaires; some difficulties can arise if the categories are not appropriate.

Opinion Polls or Sample Surveys

The interview for opinion polls or sample surveys is always conducted with a standardized schedule of questions. The interviewer may merely check off responses according to coded response categories. This is the most common type of interview used in market research and political surveys. Generally a large number of interviewers are used. The amount of training given to interviewers varies. Often the interviewers are temporary employees who have no personal commitment to the conduct or outcome of the survey.

The method of data gathering may use tape recorders and printed questionnaires. The form of questioning is standardized and attempts are made to reduce inter-interviewer variability. Digression from the set schedule of questions is not allowable. Samples tend to be relatively large, and generally are drawn by statistical methods. They may be random, stratified, or random stratified. Results are analysed by computer. To maintain uniformity and speed of obtaining the results, variation from the set schedules must be kept to a minimum. Individual elaboration in the responses beyond the set response categories is discouraged. Interviewers must stick to the exact predetermined sample. Probing for extra qualitative information is not required.

Much work is done beforehand on the preparation of the

interview schedule. Pretesting of instruments is necessary. Standardized questions have to be worked out well in advance.

There has been a great deal of research done on this type of interviewing — on reliability of interviewers, selection and training of interviewers, effects of experience on interview response rates, and effects of different methods of recording responses especially the use of tape recorders (see, for example, Beed & Stimson, 1985; Belson, 1981; Cannell, 1985a, 1985b; Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954).

Research Interviews

The interview may be used in research either as the sole source of data or together with data obtained by other means. In the latter case its function is generally to enrich the other data by adding qualitative comment rather than providing further quantitative data.

If used as the sole source of data the interview should be used when other methods of data collection are inappropriate. The interview can be used to elicit opinions, attitudes, and values and to reveal the basis of a subject's reasoning, as in Piagetian testing. It is most useful when the emphasis is on the qualitative aspects of the data, when the topic is difficult conceptually, or when the topic evokes strong emotions. It is an excellent tool to use when a great deal of individual variation is likely. It can be a more efficient tool than a questionnaire when the subjects are extremely anxious, and when subjects are unskilled in question–answer relationships. It is also useful when there is need for immediate feed-back, and for cross-checking and verification of responses, and when there is need for subjects to consider complex relations among variables and subjective phenomena.

If used to enrich data obtained by other means, interviews may add valuable subjective, explanatory material. Typical of this use is the interview of a subsample from a sample used in a questionnaire survey. These interviews also provide a validating instrument, checking on the effectiveness of the questionnaire. The interview can establish whether the meaning of the questions was understood, whether the content of the questions was relevant, and whether the response category system was adequate. Such interviews can be used both before and

after the questionnaire — before in a pilot study as a means of testing the format and afterwards to enrich the data.

Other uses are as postexperiment interviews, when feelings are sought about participation as a subject or perceptions of the purpose of the experiment, as for example in the Milgram (1974) experiments. Interviews can also be used when another perspective on reported phenomena or events is sought. For example, data may be obtained in the census or other public statistics which appear to indicate a high incidence of some phenomenon — for example teenage drinking or numbers of unemployed. Such figures show the occurrence of the phenomenon but not how it feels to be one of the statistics. Interviews can be used to give the 'human angle' to such data.

Whether the interview is used as the sole method or in association with other methods, it is necessary to have a carefully constructed interview schedule. Methods of data collection can use tape recording, video, film, check lists, and record forms. Sampling needs will be determined by the nature of the research and selection of samples will follow the same rules as for other research. The required numbers depend on how many will be needed to make valid inferences. Data categories are worked out prior to embarking upon the data collection but, unlike the questionnaire, the interview can allow for the unexpected category. Statistical analysis follows the usual demands, but because of the variability and subjectivity of responses distribution-free statistics will often prove to be the most appropriate.

Clinical Interviews

The clinical interview is the most flexible interview type, allowing many variations in style and approach. Clinicians may differ somewhat from one another in their professional orientations, hence in their approaches to interviewing, but a different style may also be adopted according to the client, the situation, and the type of problem.

Clinical interviews tend to be problem-oriented rather than data-oriented. Clients present only when something is wrong, not when things are going well. But it is the client's problem, not, as with research interviews, the researcher's. Thus although the clinician is the interviewer, he has the role of supplying the

answers — at least in the client's view — rather than that of posing the questions.

In clinical interviews the client is often the sole source of data. These interviews may follow a general plan but it is seldom explicit. The client's responses are not always recorded. The questions are not standardized or arranged in a formal schedule and many variations are possible in question form.

The relationship is not one of equality. Typical of this situation are the doctor questioning a patient, the school counsellor interviewing the student, and the marriage guidance counsellor interviewing a couple whose relationship with each other is deteriorating. One of the participants is likely to have greater power to influence the other's behaviour. For instance the doctor may prescribe drugs or surgery; the counsellor wants to help the child to change his or her behaviour to effect more efficient learning or less disruption in the class; the marriage counsellor is trying to prevent the breakdown of a marriage. All employ values as to what is desirable or effective in the particular social context within which the behaviour occurs.

From the client's or patient's point of view the clinical interview may be the therapeutic experience. As the therapist seeks to produce changed attitudes or behaviour through verbal interaction with the client, there is much probing, following of the client's lead, back-tracking, and restructuring. Participation in this interaction helps the client to see things in new ways and has a cathartic effect.

Often the substance of a clinical interview is well documented by records but it may not be amenable to research because it is not recorded in ways which allow for precise categorization, encoding, scoring, and analysis. Clinical interviews are almost always private, one-to-one interactions. Tape recording is sometimes used but the preservation of confidentiality is regarded as of paramount importance.

As clinical interviews may also continue over an extended period of time there is not the same demand as in research interviews to obtain all the data in one interview. It may be impossible to go more than a very short way on one occasion towards solving the problem.

Key Informant Interviews

The use of key informants as intermediaries between the interviewer and the focal subject group is a method much used by sociologists and anthropologists. Classical anthropologists made much use of this method when seeking access to cultures about which they had little knowledge. Cross-cultural psychologists have also used data obtained in this way, as for example, from the Human Relations Area Files, a large collection of ethnographic data obtained from many different studies and researchers. Another example, very relevant in multicultural societies such as Australia, is interviewing members of other ethnic communities. Quite frequently children have been used in the role of key informant in interviews with parents who have little English. Yet another case is when a 'representative' speaker is picked out for interview by members of 'fact-finding missions' or parliamentary delegations. Journalists frequently use key informants.

The first step in using the key informant is to find a person with whom the interviewer can converse. That person is then interviewed or observed at length on the topic of interest to the interviewer. When carried out by anthropologists this process may take considerable time but in fact-finding missions extended periods of time are seldom available. The next step is the use of the key informant as go-between and interpreter. In cases where the key informant is the bilingual interpreter, the interviewer is dependent upon the informant both to translate accurately and to report accurately on the attitudes or behaviour of the target.

The use of key informants can be very useful for establishing the parameters of a situation so that in future action or research some pitfalls may be avoided. However, many problems can arise.

The status of the informant in relation to the group is an important variable. If the gap is wide problems can occur. For example, children used as interpreters for non-English-speaking migrant parents often do not have the required knowledge and are frequently kept out of parental discussions of sensitive

issues — for parents to have to use them is often regarded as embarrassing, even degrading. The child may also feel ashamed that the parent has so little knowledge of English, and may be troubled by the burden of adult knowledge.

When key informants are used in research over a long period the prolonged interpersonal relationship which develops creates a bond between interviewer and informant which not only may interfere with the objectivity of the informant's reporting but also may affect those about whom the information is sought. For example, sometimes Aboriginal people who are used in this role have been rejected by their tribal community as they have begun to assume positions as authoritative interpreters of tribal custom, a role which rightly belongs only to certain traditional leaders.

The key informant may not possess the information sought or may not wish to divulge it, so to preserve face may provide some which is plausible but not the true account. This may occur if the questions asked of the informant are inappropriate — for example, when a female interviewer asks a male Aboriginal informant questions on rituals which are only open to men.

The need to find a person who can communicate with an outsider means that key informants are frequently marginal to their own group. They may have had experiences which separate them from their cultural origins — for example, they may have been educated overseas or in an English-speaking environment, been brought up with a white family (or an Aboriginal family, as the case may be), or have been a crew member on a ship — and which make them more open to meeting people and more tolerant of questions from outsiders than other members of the group. The apparent ease of talking with such persons may give a distorted impression of the accessibility of the total group. Freeman's (1983) attack on Margaret Mead's work makes much of the problems arising from the marginality of key informants.

Another problem is that the individuality of the informant may tend to be discounted as the informant role becomes paramount. Resentment at being 'merely used' rather than being treated as important for oneself can build up as a result. Yet at the same time the interpersonal bonds between the inform-

ant and interviewer exert a conflicting pull which can create an ambivalence of loyalties and motivations.

It is not usual to think of sampling questions in relation to the use of key informants, because there are usually very few people who are able to be used in this way. Nevertheless, wherever possible the use of a group of key informants rather than one such person in desirable, and there is a further advantage if they can be selected so that a number of different perspectives can be represented.

Reliability of data obtained through key informants should be checked by whatever other means are available. Questions are not usually in standardized form. It is not only the informant's interpretations which are open to bias. Perhaps even more so is the interviewer's interpretation of what the key informant provides. As this information must be categorized and related to other data there is a considerable likelihood that the interviewer will interpret it according to an inappropriate conceptual orientation. Early cross-cultural work in cognition was strongly criticized on this account by Cole and his associates (Cole, Gay, Glick, & Sharp, 1971).

Guided Interviews

The guided interview was developed by Morris (1960) for use with foreign students in the United States. It combined the interview with multiple choice items and other scales. The interviewer presents the written items and assists by explaining their meaning. As the subject responds to each question the interviewer obtains elaborations and qualifications, probing as needed.

The method has advantages when used with respondents with limited language skills. It is also very suitable for coding and data analysis. Its main disadvantage is that the guiding could become too direct and interfere with the spontaneity and independence of the subject's thinking.

Focused Interviews

The focused interview was developed originally by Merton (1956) and is similar to the use of the interview in combination

The media interviewers role may be that of an active participant, sometimes even an advocate for one side or another, whose aim is to use the person being interviewed to entertain or inform others.

with other research instruments. The interview is related to some shared experience, usually a play, film, or television program. Questions are in standardized form and are intended to test hypotheses. An important requirement is that the experience should be the same for all. The stimulus material can be presented either individually or in groups. Effects of these two conditions can be examined by experimental manipulations if desired.

Mass Media Interviews

The mass media interview has now become such an everyday feature on radio and television and in the daily newspapers that it must be included here as a distinct type. The principal difference between this type and others dealt with in this chapter is that these interviews are intended for an audience, or readership, other than the participants. Each interview has to be fitted into either a time or space allotment, which is generally quite brief. The interviewer's task is to obtain the relevant information within this time or space, and to do so in such a way as to arouse interest and entertain the audience. The mass of the audience of course is not usually present, though in some shows by skilled performers there may be a number of people making up a studio audience.

The skills such interviews require are verbal facility, cognitive organization, and the stage presence required of a public performance. They need not include attention to codability of responses, careful selection of samples, statistical reliability, or replicability. There is no task demand for empathy with the subject's point of view, indeed aggressive tactics are used quite frequently.

The interviewer's relationship with the audience is often more important than the message put forward by the person being interviewed — after all the interviewer will appear again and again while the person being interviewed may not. The media interviewer's role may not be that of someone standing back and letting the respondent's information have paramount importance, but rather that of an active participant, sometimes even an advocate for one side or another, whose aim is to use the person being interviewed to entertain or inform others.

The media interview is frequently used to show up features of the personality of the person being interviewed as much as

to elicit that person's ideas. Electioneering politicians, for example, are subjected to intensive questioning designed to highlight their flaws — in skill in argument, style, and personal appearance as much as in their party's policies. The style is highly personal and tends towards simplification of issues rather than complexity.

Group Interviews

Group interviews have unique characteristics in that the interviewer not only has to relate to each member of the group individually but also to the group as a whole. Within the group the members also interact with each other. Roles develop — one member may quickly take on the role of spokesperson, giving others relatively little chance to speak, another may take on the role of social facilitator, while another becomes the butt or scapegoat. The interviewer's task is often to balance competing power relationships within the group so that all views are heard and each person is given satisfying and equitable treatment.

Group interviews occur in situations such as interviewing delegations of employees and pressure groups, talking to parents in schools, family counselling, and talking to small groups of students. It is usually the case that the interviewer is only one person whereas the group may be anything from two to 20 or even more. The larger the numbers become the more formal the procedures become.

Another case of group interviewing is the politician's press conference but in that case the interviewers constitute the group and there is only one respondent.

Job Interviews

The experience of being brought before a selection panel to be interviewed for a job is a familiar one to many people. Much has been written about how the applicant should behave to create the most favourable impression on the selection panel. From the interviewer's point of view the task is to obtain from each applicant interviewed the most relevant information for the position. Usually there is more than one person on the

The Job Interview

selection panel, each of whom either has a specific role before the interview begins or develops one as the interview proceeds. The applicant may or may not be told what these roles are when the panel members are introduced. A successful selection interview allows each of the panel members a fair share of the questioning, encourages the applicant to speak up without dominating the interview, covers the essential aspects of skill and background, and avoids redundancy, repetition, irrelevant conversational chatter, pejorative comment, use of discriminatory terms, and behavioural cues which suggest prejudgement of the worth of the applicant.

Job interviews are often supported by written materials such as references and summaries of qualifications and previous experience which may accompany the application. The interview adds to this information and may have the function of obtaining further explanations and qualifications on the written application, but it is often used to make judgements on the personal characteristics of the applicants. It is this function which is most open to abuse, most likely to evoke discriminatory attitudes, and least open to critical appraisal.

Telephone Interviews

Telephone interviews are used for diverse purposes. Perhaps best known is the telephone crisis counselling carried out by organizations such as Life Line, but there are many others. Job interviews are sometimes carried out by telephone. Another group is the popular 'call-in' radio programs where members of the public telephone to express their problems or opinions to a media 'personality' or an expert such as a psychologist or medical practitioner.

The difference between this type and face-to-face interviews lies in the necessity to convey all the meaning without any additional nonverbal cues. Many interviewers do not even have the use of a written interview schedule because the content of the interviews cannot be predicted. There is thus a greater demand on auditory discrimination and on memory than in face-to-face interviewing.

Telephone interviews are used extensively in market and survey research. Many problems relating to sampling can be ident-

identified as telephones are not equally accessible to all. On the other hand the ease with which responses can be entered directly into a computer makes the use of this medium attractive to many survey researchers.

Combined Methods

There is no necessity for an interview to be restricted to only one of these types. More than one method can be used in the one interview. This approach has several advantages, especially when the more 'objective' and highly structured types of questioning are combined with the more subjective and loosely structured. Both quantitative and qualitative data can be obtained and the reliability of one type can be checked by the other.

Clinical interviews can include structured personal data reports, focused questioning, and guided interview techniques as well as in-depth questioning.

Different stimulus modes can be used together to provide complementary data sources. Some examples are using aural and visual stimuli in association with interview questions, or presenting a task to be carried out and while it is being done asking the subject questions about his way of doing it. Closed question formats can be used in the manner of the guided interview, using written scales and multiple choice items, stimulus pictures, and rating and ranking items within the body of the interview in combination with other open-ended questions.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Cannell, C.F. (1985c). Interviewing in telephone surveys. In T.W. Beed & R.J. Stimson (Eds.), *Survey interviewing: Theory and techniques*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

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CHAPTER 3

Structuring the Interview

All interviews need some degree of structure. As can be seen from the different types of interview outlined in the previous chapter, a great deal of variation is possible. For research interviewing it is extremely important that a great deal of preliminary planning goes into the structuring of the interview. The structure is concerned with the content — what happens and what the interview is about.

Interview Schedules

The interview schedule contains the list of questions to be asked. It determines the course of the interview through its content and the order in which the questions are presented. It is the interviewer's most important tool and deserves a great deal of care in its construction.

The variables which contribute to structure relate mainly to characteristics of the interview schedule. These are the content, the order of questioning, question and response format, the methods of recording the responses, and the methods used for coding, interpretation, and analysis of the responses. Other variables affecting structure are the nature of the subject population to be interviewed and the situational variables of location

and duration of the interview. All of these variables must be taken into account in preparing the interview schedule and planning the conduct of the interview.

Respondent Variables

The required numbers and the background characteristics of the respondents are important in that both the style of interviewing and the content of questions must be matched to the respondents' characteristics. Age, sex, culture, level of education, and social background are likely to be significant variables. In research interviewing these variables need to be carefully defined and whatever criteria are used must be rigorously applied throughout the whole series of interviews. As an example, consider an interview designed to investigate views about sex education — what can be asked and how it can be asked will vary greatly depending on the age of the respondents, whether children, adolescents, or adults.

Content

The content of the interview is what the questions are all about. It is apparent from this example that content and subject variables are interdependent. The content must be appropriate for the respondents in its subject matter and its level of complexity.

Both interviewer and respondent need to be clear about the purpose of the questioning before they can fully accept and carry out their reciprocal roles in discussing the topic. The respondent has a strong need for cognitive structure as well as a need to develop favourable interpersonal relationships.

The content can be arranged around a single central theme, or several minor themes can be developed around a central theme with varying degrees of importance. In each case it is important that the central theme can be clearly identified. Cognitive clarity in regard to the content of the questions both aids recall and helps the respondent to organize his thoughts.

Location and Duration

The structure of the interview will depend to a large degree upon where and when it is to be conducted, and how long it will take. These variables are closely related, as more time can

Opinion pollster in a busy street.

be given to an interview conducted in a private and comfortable place. Interviews in public places cannot take much of the respondent's time. Many people will be quite willing to answer a few brief questions but unwilling to become a public spectacle if the interview is prolonged for more than a few minutes. Longer interviews need places for sitting rather than standing. Social politeness norms (see Chapter 1) demand that people should be made physically comfortable for longer interactions, and this is even more necessary if the topic is delicate or conceptually complex.

In general, the less time there is available, the simpler the overall structure of the interview and the more highly structured the questions must be. However, the time allowed must be sufficient for the purpose. For research interviewing, pretesting of the schedule will be necessary to find out how long it is likely to take and this must be done with respondents who are loquacious as well as those who are brief in their response style.

Order of Questioning

Because an interview takes place within a temporal framework, all interviews progress through a certain temporal order whether they are highly structured or informal. The first stages of opening the interview are a mutual exploration of the task demand and the establishment of favourable attitudes; the second stage is the development in which the content is elaborated and probed; finally there is the stage of release which brings the interview to its conclusion.

OPENING THE INTERVIEW

In opening the interview the following needs must be met.

Establishing the credentials of the interviewer. Interviewers must introduce themselves in such a way that the respondent knows to whom he or she is talking and for what purpose. Half-truths and exaggerated claims must be avoided. For example, a student should not suggest that the replies will be used to solve some social problems when they are merely for that student's studies. Otherwise, when the real purpose is found out, all favourable relationships based on that expectation may be wiped out. Many sales promotions masquerade as 'research' and it is only fair for the potential provider of the information to know exactly who is to gain from the results.

Developing rapport. The first few minutes of contact are the most important for developing rapport between interviewer and respondent. The methods of achieving good rapport include communication skills (see Chapter 4), but at the beginning much effort will be expended on 'sizing up' the other person, attempting to find out what the interviewer wants and why. Honesty, clarity, and not forcing people will have positive effects — stand-over tactics, threats of how bad it will be not to do what the interviewer wants will produce hostility. It is also important for the interviewer to keep an open mind and not come to quick judgements about the attitudes of the respondent on the basis of voice, speech, appearance, dress, or environment.

Introducing the method of data collection. The interviewer must make clear to the respondent at the beginning of the

interview how the answers are to be recorded. If a prepared response sheet is to be used, the respondent should be shown it and give approval for its use.

If the responses are to be tape recorded or a video recording made, the respondent's permission must be obtained before proceeding. Many people are at first apprehensive of the use of tape recording and may become tense and stilted in manner for the first few minutes. It is useful, therefore, to ensure that no ego-threatening material is introduced at that time. Allowing the respondent to play back a little of the tape and offering to play the tape back at the end of the interview are sound ways of putting the respondent more at ease.

Tape recorders should be as small and unobtrusive as possible. At times it may be better to sacrifice high technical quality for the sake of putting the respondent more at ease. Many respondents become so thoroughly attracted to, or intimidated by, elaborate equipment with high-fi stereospeakers and obtrusive microphones that they are unable to think about the content of the interview. At the same time it is not good practice to hide the recording device from the respondent.

The respondent should also be told what is to be done with the answers or with the recording. Anonymity should be promised only when it can be maintained.

Establishing the content. The opening of the interview should give a clear indication of what the interview is to be about. Interviewers sometimes make the mistake of revealing only a minor aspect of the major topic when introducing the interview. When later a respondent finds that the questions have veered away from that theme to another to which they gave no consent, there are likely to be hostile reactions and the willingness to respond to further questions can be seriously affected.

Establishing the content has the important function of creating a cognitive framework which will assist respondents to remember, to organize their thoughts and to understand what is wanted of them. It also has a valuable function in developing rapport. As it draws the respondent into a shared experience with the interviewer in a mutual exploration of the topic it reduces tension between them.

Giving a preview of the structure of the interview. By giving a brief indication of the structure of the interview, the interviewer can enable a respondent to obtain an idea of what is expected of them and what they can expect of the interviewer. This preamble need not be elaborate. It should indicate the objectives but should not put rigid restraints upon the respondent.

Fact-seeking. The opening stage of the interview is a favourable time to obtain factual background data. In many cases the respondent can participate in recording this information. This helps to ensure the correctness of the entries and to explain any variation not accounted for by the category systems the interviewer has set up.

The personal background information which is sought should be only what is relevant and necessary for the purpose of the interview, and should be recognized as being so by the respondent.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERVIEW

The development phase contains the main body of questions and responses. Attention has to be given to covering the relevant and important aspects of the topics. Thus the order of questions is important. A variety of structures can be utilized. Problems arise in regard to sequencing and grouping the questions, and handling contingencies. In general, the order should proceed from the more superficial (level 1) to the deeper level (level 2) as described in Chapter 2. Topics of a sensitive nature or ego-threatening themes should be introduced gently. Figures 1 to 6 show various structures which can be employed.

Independent items — single topic questions. The simplest structure is when each response refers only to the one question (Figure 1). There may be little connection between questions, which are like individual items in a questionnaire, all having to do with the general theme but not related to each other. A problem with this structure is that the respondent may perceive a relationship which was not intended and link replies back to previous questions or responses.

$Q_1 \rightarrow R_1$

$Q_2 \rightarrow R_2$

$Q_3 \rightarrow R_3$

Figure 1. Independent items — single topic questions

Sequential items — chain structure. Responses and questions can be linked sequentially in an associative chain (Figure 2). The number of questions or responses in each linked group may vary. Questions are often open-ended. There are no feedback loops built into this structure. This structure may represent a departure from a prepared schedule. It is the structure which occurs when the conversation gets 'off the point'. It is typical of unplanned social exchanges. Interpersonal interactions may override an interest in a particular theme.

$$Q_1 \rightarrow R_1 \rightarrow Q_2 \rightarrow R_2 \rightarrow Q_3$$

Figure 2. Sequential items — chain structure

Grouped themes — constellated structure. Sets of related questions, with each set grouped around a separate theme, may form integrated complexes of questions and answers. These may vary in the number of contributing items and may also use other means of obtaining data, as for example rating scales, associated with the questions. Each theme is explored in depth before the interview moves on to another theme. A variety of structures may be used within each constellation (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Grouped themes — constellated structure

Branching structure with channelling effect. Although the respondent may give more than one alternative in the response, only one may actually be used by the interviewer. This has the effect of channelling the discussion into certain directions. Eventually the respondent reduces the variety and complexity of responses into the simpler chain structure (Figure 4).

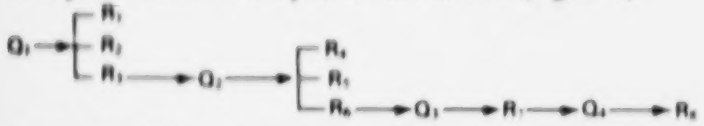

Figure 4. Branching structure with channelling effect

Sequential structure with simple feedback loops. Structures which use feedback loops are the most complex. In these structures both interviewer and respondent may refer back to previous questions or responses, take up contingencies, or ignore some aspects for the time being to return to them later.

The simplest form is when the structure is sequential (Figure 5). In this case a question may lead to a response which contains several aspects. The interviewer selects one aspect and asks a sequence of questions on that aspect, returns to another aspect and treats that one similarly until as many aspects are explored as are needed.

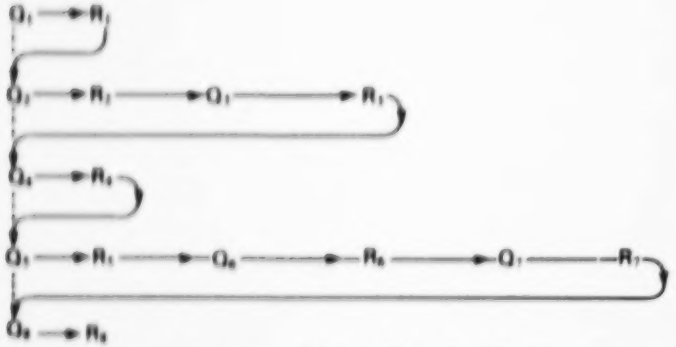

Figure 5. Sequential structure with simple feedback loops

Branching structure with feedback loops. This is the most complex type of structure with many possible variations. Both interviewer and respondent may move freely from one aspect of a question or response to another. This type of structure is excellent for exploring delicate interpersonal relations or topics which are conceptually complex. In this structure the opening question tends to be a fairly general one leading to a number of possible responses. Of those given, the interviewer selects one, exploring it in depth by a constellation of related questions. When that theme is exhausted, the interviewer returns to another of the aspects and proceeds in a similar manner. Within each of these explorations a variety of simpler structures can be used.

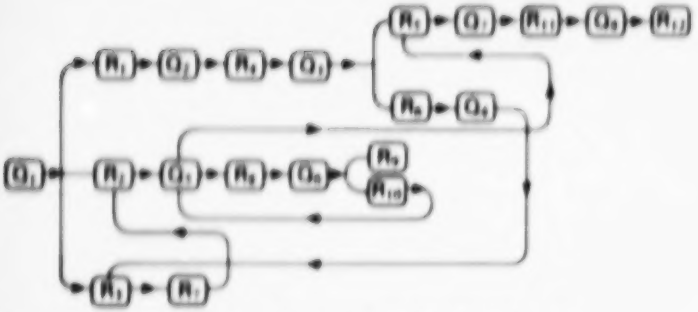

Figure 6. Complex branching structure with feedback loops

Figure 6 illustrates the branching structure with feedback loops, as exemplified in this excerpt from an interview on mother–child interaction:

Q1: What do you usually do when Gary [the child] disobeys you?
R1: I usually speak firmly to him.
R2: Well, sometimes if he is really naughty I give him a light smack.
R3: If I have absolutely run out of patience, I send him to his room until he recovers.
Q2: What do you usually say when you 'speak firmly' to him?
R4: Oh just something to tell him who's the boss.
Q3: Can you give me an example?
R5: Well the other day he wouldn't go to bed when it was time. I spoke to him several times before I got cross. He could tell by my voice I was cross.
R6: And I usually threaten to take away some of his toys when he disobeys me.
Q4: What do you say when you do that?
R7: Well I mostly say 'Well Gary, if you don't stop that before I count three that train (or whatever he's playing with at the time) will go straight into the cupboard'. And I do it too. Then I'd send him to his room.
Q5: Let's come back to the times when you'd give him a light smack? When would you do that?

R8: When he keeps on taking Peter's things. Peter, that's his brother. He's only little but they get a bit wild playing together and he won't listen to anything I say.
Q6: Who won't?
R9: Oh, Gary. Peter's all right.
R10: Oh yes, and when he gets into his father's tools and things.
Q7: You said he could tell by your voice when you are cross. How do you know he can?
R11: You can see by the look on his face. He looks sort of frightened and guilty. I always feel bad about that.
Q8: Why do you think you feel bad about it?
R12: Oh he's really such a little fellow, but you've got to be firm.

Notice how the interviewer has not yet returned to probe the third of the first three responses but the respondent herself refers back to her own previous responses.

Without the assistance of a prepared interview schedule, these structures may easily become uncontrolled. If the unfinished interactions are not completed by feedback loops, vital information may be ignored and only later does the interviewer realize that it was forgotten or lost amongst other detail.

If this structure is to be used in research, the coding system must be thoroughly and carefully worked out beforehand; otherwise, it may be difficult to extract codable data from the replies. One of the attractive features of these structures is the richness of information they may provide on the responses and questions which are used, but they are more difficult for the interviewer to handle than the simpler types. One of the difficulties is the changing order, another is that of shifting from one line of discussion to another, i.e. putting the feedback loop into operation.

CONCLUSION AND RELEASE

The completion of the interview should bring with it a sense of satisfaction in both the interviewer and the respondent. Each should feel that the purposes of the interview have been served. It should leave both with the feeling that they have participated in and assisted each other in something each regarded as worthwhile.

To ensure that these feelings will be those which do remain, the interviewer should not end abruptly, but 'wind down'. This can be done by indicating to the respondent when there are only a few more questions to be answered. There should be a shift away from threatening or difficult topics to easier or more factual topics. It is imperative that ego defences should not be left in absolute disarray.

The courtesy of expressing thanks to the respondent should never be overlooked. Not only is it appreciated by the respondent, but it also helps in the winding down as a signal that the interview is drawing to its conclusion. The respondent is often expected to put quite a lot of effort into giving the answers, and it is good to show appreciation for that effort. After a difficult interview it is often easier to think of what is missing or what one failed to obtain than allow for the considerable achievement of the replies which were obtained.

Question and Response Format

In the preparation of an interview schedule, a great deal of attention should be given to question format. The format refers to the form in which the questions and responses are expressed. Differences may be found in phrasing, range, and degree of closure. The response format is determined to a considerable degree by the question format. For example, one of the most obvious contrasts in question format is between open-ended questions and those which offer multiple choice alternatives. Responses to multiple choice questions are likely to be more restricted in range and style than responses to open-ended questions.

PHRASING

The phrasing of questions must be such that the meaning is unequivocal. A first step in meeting this need is for interviewers to know exactly what they are interested in finding out from each question. The question can then be phrased in precise, specific terms which keep the respondent to the point.

It is essential to try out the question first on other individuals to locate any anomalies or ambiguities, and the phrasing should be adjusted until the intent and meaning are quite clear.

The phrasing must be such as to open doors to a response, not close them. Questions phrased so as to imply a pre-judgement on the part of the interviewer close doors. The implication of prejudgement may come through to the respondent even when the interviewer is not intending to reveal personal views. A typical verbal device which does this is the use of a positive statement followed by a negating question, for example 'You are a member of the . . . aren't you?' or 'You aren't really as young as . . . are you?' Making evaluative comments or giving summarizing statements rather than asking questions will also close doors, as these remarks may be interpreted as signalling the end of discussion.

Phrasing of questions should not present alternatives in a way which introduces one as more important or more favoured by the interviewer than others. The questions must not lead a person into a particular reply because of the way they are phrased. The above are all biasing effects (see also Chapter 4).

The questions must be such that they are best answered in face-to-face contact. Much information can be obtained more efficiently in other ways. For example, we do not ask children whether they behave well in class or what marks they got if we can find this out from the records unless we want to find out their perceptions of how they behaved or whether they are satisfied with their marks. Interviews only reveal what the respondents can express.

RELEVANCE

Questions must have perceived relevance to the respondent. It is useless to put questions which are not socially meaningful. For example, in rural surveys which ask respondents about 'domestic workers' or employment of 'unskilled labour' on the farm, it is possible that the farmer's wife may not regard the assistance of daughters or other household members as 'work' in that they are not paid wages, and the farmer must agree that such workers are 'unskilled' before he can give details. Similarly, it would be useless to ask many Asian peasants in rural villages about their use of trucks, tractors, and mechanical harvesters.

RANGE

Questions can differ in range from broad to narrow. In structuring an interview schedule, both broad general questions and narrow specific questions can be used to complement each other in an interactive pattern.

In general, an effective structure is to open with a broad question then follow up with more specific questions, narrowing the range as the interview develops. This type of question pattern is useful when the interviewer is introducing the topic.

Another approach is to begin with narrow-ranging questions on non-threatening or factual aspects then build up to broader, more general questions addressed to the wider issues. This stage may then be followed by probing for detail on specific issues. This structure is effective when the respondent initiates the interview, for example with a counsellor, by raising a vaguely articulated problem. The counsellor's first step is to try to get to what the specific issues are before dealing with the problem.

Broad-range questions are appropriate for:

- Discovering the respondent's paths of association regarding a certain topic, situation, or event.
- Discovering the relative importance of various aspects of a topic, situation, or event experienced.
- Discovering the frame of reference being used by the respondent in observing, analysing, or participating in a situation.
- Discovering the chronological order of the respondent's experience in a given situation.
- Discovering the level and style of speech used by the respondent.

Narrow-range questions are appropriate for:

- Seeking details and probing for qualification and elaboration.
- Encouraging precision in memory for details.
- Obtaining factual background data.
- Exploring complex, logical relationships with many interacting variables.
- Breaking down a wide-ranging response into its various parts.

DEGREE OF CLOSURE

One of the effects of using a closed structure is to restrict the range of possible responses, thereby making coding and analysis

of responses easier. Open-ended questions provide greater scope for variety in response, but the responses may be difficult to classify. Compare the following format variations in a question on school achievement.

Open-ended format: 'What are your views on the importance of school achievement?'

Closed formats:

(a) Multiple choice format in single dimension only: 'What are your views on school achievement? Is it extremely important, quite important, slightly important, or not important at all?'

(b) Multiple choice format, possibly in more than one dimension, with elaborated wording: 'What are your views on school achievement? Of the following alternatives which one most nearly agrees with your opinion?

- It is essential for all children to achieve in school.
- School achievement is important overall, but not necessarily for every child.
- School achievement is usually made out to be more important than it should be.
- In today's world school achievement is not really important at all.'

(c) Ranking format: 'What do you think is the most important of the following different aspects of school achievement?

- Getting good marks in exams.
- Always doing one's work without making mistakes.
- Understanding concepts and difficult ideas.
- Getting along well in the school environment with teachers and other pupils.'

When the respondent gives the first preference proceed with 'What do you think is the next most important aspect of school achievement?' until all four ranks are completed.

(d) Combined format: Open-ended questions can be used in conjunction with multiple choice and ranking formats by adding probe questions such as 'Why do you think that?', 'In what circumstances . . .', etc.

In these examples, the content of the multiple choice and ranking items has been varied somewhat. Any of the suggested alternatives could have been mentioned in a response to the open-ended question but there would be no guarantee that any of them would have.

The first multiple choice item (single dimension only) would place less demand upon the information processing of the respondent than the second. As all the alternatives are in the same format, there is less memory for the content of the question and less cognitive demand in understanding the implications of the given alternatives and comparing them. The ranking item is more demanding still. It also covers more than one dimension of school achievement.

COMBINED ORAL AND WRITTEN MODES

Both the multiple choice and the ranking items will take longer in an interview if they are given orally only. However, if the interviewer uses a written mode as well as the oral mode, the complete item can be done quite quickly. The oral aspects of questioning can then be confined to introducing the item and following up with probe questions. If this type of question format is used orally only, there is a strong possibility that an extensive reply given to one alternative will tend to make the interviewer less likely to continue with the other alternatives, leading to the channelled structure as in Figure 4. The respondent is also likely to confound the other alternatives with the one to which the response is directed in such a way that for the interviewer to return to the other alternatives may appear redundant. The respondent may then feel that the question has already been answered and become uncooperative in answering it again — 'Wasn't the interviewer listening? I just told him about that'.

ALLOWING FOR ALL POSSIBLE RESPONSES

For research interviewing particularly, the question format should allow for the entire range of possibilities to be given in the response. This is not to say that every possible type of answer has to be included among the offered alternatives, but that all facets should be represented. For example, if the 'importance' is being sought, the interviewer must expect that every degree of importance, from extremely important to extremely unimportant, could be given as a reply. The format of the question must not be such as to include certain responses and exclude others. Inclusion of an 'any other' category will often offset any bias arising from this source. Alternatives in

multiple choice and ranking items must be independent of each other. Categories should not overlap and the offered alternatives should all be of the same range. If one is a broad alternative while the others are narrow, there is the possibility that the former may include the latter.

Because these problems do not arise in open-ended questions, the open-ended question is easier to use during the interview, but the format becomes the more difficult to handle when the responses are to be coded and analysed. Out of the total of responses which are possible, some responses will not occur, and it will be difficult to establish whether this is because the behaviour or attitude did not occur or whether some bias in the question form discouraged the respondents from referring to it.

Response Format

As was suggested above, the response format is to a large degree dependent upon the question format. Whether there is to be only one component in the response or several can be predetermined in multiple choice questioning, as, for example, the selection of one alternative versus the rank ordering of several, but of course the response format is less able to be controlled when open-ended questions are used. Narrow-range questions are more likely to produce single responses than broad-range questions. In preparing the coding procedures for an interview schedule, the likely response formats for each question must be predicted.

Methods of Recording the Responses

TAPE RECORDING AND VIDEOTAPING

Tape recording and videotaping are by far the most reliable methods of recording the responses. The interviewer has an entire, exact record of what took place and may later return to different places at will to examine the record in more detail. Several raters may be used to test the reliability of the coding system or the interpretation of the data. These methods are also particularly good in training teams of interviewers and when equivalence is needed for standardizing procedures.

Videotaping adds a non-verbal dimension which can be valuable. The disadvantage of videotaping is the weight and size of the equipment. Despite recent technical advances, portable video equipment is still heavy and obtrusive — it is almost impossible for one person to interview and make a videotape with a portable video camera at the same time. Video cameras can be almost unnoticed if used as permanent fixtures, but this means that the respondent must come to the interviewer.

One disadvantage of both tape recording and video-recording methods is the possibility of generating self-consciousness and heightening anxiety. Many respondents feel guarded about having a permanent record made of what they say, and many are camera-shy. These problems can generally be overcome by careful techniques. Offering to play the tape back after a few minutes generally will set the person more at ease.

A second disadvantage is that these methods require a great deal of time and effort to make the most of the information which is obtained. There is almost too much information for it all to be used, so a sifting process has to be introduced.

CASE WORK NOTEBOOK

A method used frequently in professional practice by social workers, clinicians, and many others is the case work notebook. The interviewer takes brief notes during the interview and fills it out later. This method is most efficient if the detailed report is rounded out immediately after the interview. This may be done either in written form or with a tape recorder or dictaphone. The method is less reliable than taping the whole interview, but is more economical in review time and has the advantage of allowing the interviewer to concentrate more on the content than on the effects of the equipment. Its disadvantages lie in problems of listening and taking notes at the same time, possibly missing important information while still taking notes on what was just said. The respondent can feel that the interviewer is not listening while he is writing notes, or can become suspicious that the interviewer is not writing down exactly what is being said.

POST-INTERVIEW RECALL

In clinical interviews and in interviews which have to be conducted in difficult physical or social environments, a variation

of post-interview recall is sometimes used. No notes are taken at the time, but the whole concentration of the interviewer is given to the respondent. This method has the advantage for the respondent of being listened to, it does not provoke anxiety about what will happen to what is said, and it gives the impression of confidentiality. However, it is not as reliable as the notebook method. In the subsequent report there is the likelihood of forgetting or omitting some details which may not have appeared to be important at the time but which might have been shown to be of greater significance had the interviewer been able to review the entire interview as on a tape recording. There is also the problem of remembering the information in its correct sequence and there will be the tendency to make fragments of information into whole cloth in order to make a coherent story out of the responses. The possibility of bias arising from the interviewer's expectations and interpretations is therefore quite high and the method should be avoided unless it is the only avenue possible in the circumstances.

PRECODED RESPONSE FORMS

The use of precoded response sheets and check lists belongs mainly in research interviews and opinion polls, but is also the usual method for obtaining readily classifiable factual background data. This method is reliable as long as the categories are able to account for the variety of responses, are independent of each other, and are defined by precise criteria. The method has disadvantages when rich and complex responses are generated by the questions as it may not do justice to the quality of the data.

Interpretation and Analysis

The structure of an interview is a means to an end, not an end in itself. The goal is the interpretation and analysis of the information which is obtained. Thus the methods of analysis are not to be thought of later, after the interview is completed, but must play an integral part in the planning of the question content, the sequences, the question and response formats, and the methods of recording. The statistical treatment of interview data follows the same rules as for any other type of data.

Suggestions for Further Reading

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CHAPTER 4

Techniques of Interviewing

If we try to analyse what actually goes on in an interview, it becomes apparent very quickly that a great many things are occurring at the same time. Also the situation quickly changes as first one person is the speaker, then the speaker becomes the listener. While these verbal exchanges are going on, the interviewer may also be reading from the interview schedule, recording notes on the replies, and checking on the working of the equipment. At the same time both interviewer and respondent are trying to work out the implications of what is being said, and both are reacting to each other socially and affectively. The interviewer's task is to balance these competing demands in such a way as to maximize their benefits and minimize their costs.

The structure of the interview gives the framework within which the interviewer operates. Given the same structure in an interview schedule and strict controls over procedures, one might expect that there would be little margin for differences in outcome from one interviewer to another. This is not the case, and it is necessary for interviewers to cultivate effective techniques so that their interviewing can yield useful results. This is true for all types of interviews, no matter what degree

of inbuilt structure they may have. In this chapter we turn to practical ways of helping interviewers put principles into practice.

Managing the Interview Situation

The first consideration is to make sure that the interview runs smoothly. This is the interviewer's responsibility, not the respondent's, so interviewers must first organize themselves and their equipment.

USE OF RECORDING EQUIPMENT

If equipment such as a tape, film, or video recorder is to be used there must be no failures due to lack of preparation. Know how to operate the equipment. Practise until you can do it smoothly and unobtrusively. Know also how to recognize the commonly occurring faults, e.g. cassettes too loosely wound, tape coming adrift, and if possible how to fix them.

Check that all equipment is working before commencing the interview, and have it checked again after use. Use only equipment you understand and with which you have familiarized yourself — not just one like it but that particular piece of equipment. You should also have back-up equipment on hand in case something goes seriously wrong during the interview.

If you are interviewing away from your own base, e.g. in people's homes, offices, schools, make sure that you can carry all the equipment you need and that there is an appropriate place to use it when you get there. It is also worth having battery packs as alternative power sources in case power points are not available or they are in inconvenient places.

The smaller the equipment the less it dominates the interview. Use built-in microphones wherever possible. Choose the equipment most appropriate for the task rather than that with the greatest recording capacity. Remember it is a means to an end, not the end itself.

Sometimes you may feel that you need at least three hands. Skill in interviewing can require manipulative dexterity. Practise handling the operation of the equipment at the same time as listening, taking notes, and handling the interview schedule until you can do it without losing the place, dropping papers, etc.

OBTAINING THE RESPONDENT'S PARTICIPATION

If you are using equipment the cooperation of the respondent is essential. So, ask permission to use the equipment, and explain what will happen to the tape or film after the interview, e.g., analysis, use of individual case material.

Allow the respondent to become familiar with the procedure. Do a trial run, allowing the respondent to listen or watch the playback for a few minutes. Use introductory factual or non-threatening questions only.

Offer to play back the interview to the respondent at the conclusion of the interview. If the respondent has asked for the replay remember to offer to do so. A little will probably be enough, but allow time in case more is wanted. If you are short of time, offer to play back some but not all of the interview.

CARE OF DATA ON TAPES AND CASSETTES

Systematically identify the content of each tape and make a written record. You should code the data as soon as possible after the interview — the content is fresher in your mind, and the tape may be re-used if required. Tapes and cassettes deteriorate after some time, so transfer the contents to a new tape if they are still wanted; check on quality from time to time.

OPTIMIZING THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The interview takes place in a physical setting. This environment should be such as to make communication easy and the participants comfortable and able to interact. Unfavourable conditions can affect the interview in many ways that can easily be avoided.

Choose a place with privacy, and avoid having other persons present. If husbands will not allow their wives to be interviewed by men, use a woman interviewer. Others may insist on being present — be aware that their presence will affect the wife's responses.

Choose a place that is quiet, where you will not have to raise your voice to be heard. Background noise which is not bothersome in ordinary conversation makes for much greater interference on tapes. You should also choose a time and place where you are not likely to be interrupted frequently.

The environment should be such as to make communication easy and the participants comfortable and able to interact.

Keep the interview schedule, note pad, and any recording equipment unobtrusive — you do not have to hide it, but it should not dominate the interaction.

Choose seats that are moderately comfortable — neither so spartan as to give a stiff back nor so relaxing as to send you both to sleep. Eye contact should be possible, so sit either opposite or around the corner from the respondent. However, do not place the respondent facing the light with your face in shadow; sit so that each can view each other equally comfortably. Finally, do not sit so close as to invade the other's personal space — you will notice the respondent pull back if you are too close.

Whose territory is it? Adjust your approach according to whether the interview is being conducted in your territory — (your office, laboratory, etc.), that of the respondent (his home, school, office), or neutral territory (public place, shopping centre, etc.). Consider how 'neutral' it is for the respondent, as well as for the interviewer.

TIME FACTORS

Time of day can be an important consideration for many people. Some people prefer day time, others the evening or afternoons. You must not try to override politeness norms in arranging a time for the interview.

Biorhythms can be important to some — do not try to interview very early if they tell you they are not 'morning' types. Time of day is also important in terms of availability. Interviews held late in the day can interfere with many competing demands — e.g., dinner to prepare, tiredness after a day's work, wish to sit down and watch television, needs of other family members. Check carefully beforehand to arrange a time when competing demands are fewer.

The expected duration of the interview may well be a determining factor in the respondent's agreeing to be interviewed. Be prepared to say how long the interview is likely to take, but do not underestimate the length for the sake of obtaining agreement. If it is longer than you say, the respondent is quite likely to become resentful and replies will be affected. The duration should be appropriate to the respondent (see Chapter 3).

Communication Skills

It is essential for interviewers to spend a lot of effort in developing their communication skills. Speaking and listening skills are at the heart of the interviewer's skill repertoire.

SPEAKING SKILLS

The interviewer must be able to convey the questions in a way that the respondent can hear, understand and respond to them easily.

Keep to a medium pace — anxiety often has the effect of making a person talk faster. Listen to yourself on tape. It is better to speak too slowly than too fast, but if you slow down keep to meaningful units.

Volume should be neither too loud nor too soft. It is relative to the respondent. It is easy to let the volume escalate or fade; do not fade away if the respondent does. If the interview is recorded try to keep the volume fairly even so that the microphone will pick up the voices throughout. Voices soften under anxiety, so watch that the microphone is still picking up the voice. Test yourself beforehand on the equipment so that you know how loudly or softly you can speak to register at different distances from the microphone. Do not shout, especially with timid respondents. Loud voices are often felt to indicate overbearing aggressive attitudes.

Pitch is better low than high. Voices tend to rise if people are speaking too fast, and when they are anxious. Lower pitch is easier to listen to and is usually rated as more 'pleasant'.

Clarity of voice is important. The respondent has to hear all of what is in the question. Do not drop the voice to inaudibility at the end of the question, or swallow the ends of sentences, or mumble. Not only do the respondents not know what the content of the question is, but they will interpret these aberrations as signs of unsureness on the interviewer's part, lack of interest in their opinions, or deliberate attempts to be rude.

Clarity of pronunciation is more important than 'correctness' of pronunciation. Use standard, conservative pronunciation if in any doubt. If you have a non-standard language background, explain it to the respondent and make sure that your accent gives no difficulty. Be aware of any of your own pronunciation idiosyncrasies which might confuse the respondent.

Clarity of phrasing and wording is more important than clarity of pronunciation. Difficulty level can vary according to the age and education of the respondent, but as a general rule plain words are best. So, use phrasing and vocabulary that are meaningful to the respondent, and avoid fashionable jargon and catch phrases.

Use short sentences with single ideas, especially when asking questions, and use simple grammatical constructions. Group material by 'chunking' phrases into meaningful bits rather than deliver the whole sentence or question as one unit or as a succession of units of equal value.

Use pauses positively. Do not feel that you have to fill every momentary gap in the flow of conversation. A pause can allow the respondent time to collect thoughts, the interviewer too. It may also provide a releasing mechanism after a difficult series of questions and responses.

LISTENING SKILLS

It is as important to learn how to listen well as it is to learn how to express oneself, and whereas the interviewer can consciously attend to such mechanical aspects of speech as phrasing, pronunciation, speed, and volume, the respondent cannot be expected to do so. People do not always speak in precise sentences: their meanings are conveyed in a host of complex forms, with and without verbs and regardless of correctness in grammar. The analysis of verbal exchanges shows that the listener relies on more than the surface meanings to interpret the speaker's intentions.

In casual conversations between people who know each other there is usually a great deal of sharing of mutual frames of reference, hence implicit meanings (or deep structure) are readily interpreted. In interviewing there is no guarantee that this will occur from the outset. Part of the interviewer's task in the early stages of the interview is therefore to explore possible shared verbal frames of reference until the level or style is reached that enables real communication to proceed.

To do this the interviewer has to listen carefully both to what is being said and to how it is said. The interviewer must make listening an active behaviour, not a passive state. It is important to remember that more than one level of inference may be

possible in what is said and to be alert to the possible interpretations.

Hearing is not the same as listening but it is a necessary precondition. Sit where you can hear and make sure you can be heard. Constant interruptions with 'I beg your pardon', or 'Would you repeat that please', are disconcerting to both interviewer and respondent and may suggest to the respondent that the other was not listening.

Attending is necessary for hearing. Resist distractions and concentrate on what the respondent is saying, rather than on what you are going to say next. Avoid interrupting, and wait for the speaker to finish.

Look at the respondent while the respondent is speaking. One of the main advantages of tape recording over writing notes is that it allows the interviewer to concentrate on listening. Maintaining eye contact helps the interviewer to show interest and alertness.

Do not give evaluative comment or feedback until you are sure that the respondent has completed what he or she has to say. Be patient, otherwise trying to help the respondent express ideas may merely show that you have made a judgement too soon, or that you wish to channel the questioning in a particular direction, with which the respondent may or may not concur.

REMEMBERING

Remembering what the respondent answered to an earlier question is vital in even the simplest interview structures. When complex branching structures are used the demands upon the interviewer's memory are extremely high. To improve remembering skill practise with simple structures before tackling more difficult structures.

Try to extract the essential meaning when listening. Do not worry about trying to remember every little detail but try to understand the important essentials. If you take notes, write down key words which you can use later to access details rather than write down all the respondent's words verbatim.

Listen with a view to detecting the sequencing, ordering and structuring in what is said, but beware of imposing your own structures which suit your views not the respondent's.

Use chunking to assist remembering. Group ideas into small

units of related ideas, and relate the units to each other.

Withholding comment until after the respondent has finished helps as you must try to remember what was said in the earlier part of the reply. The later part of a response may often at least partly contradict the first part, so it is important to remember both stages of the response. Ask yourself why there was a shift and to what social pressures, or anxiety, the person was possibly reacting.

UNDERSTANDING

If you do not understand, ask for clarification. For example, say, 'I'm not sure that I followed you/understood what you were saying. Would you mind explaining a bit more/telling me more, etc.?' The onus is on the interviewer to understand rather than on respondents to express themselves clearly.

Search for meanings in what is said. Mentally summarize the key ideas, themes, etc. to yourself, trying to extract the meaning as the respondent is speaking, but treat these as tentative, 'keeping your mind open' until the response is complete and you are sure you understand it.

FEEDBACK

Feedback takes many forms, from the slightest lift of an eyebrow or a finger (enough to close a million dollar auction of a famous painting, so we are told) to complex verbal and behavioural messages which convey to another that a message has been received, understood, and responded to. Nuances of feedback messages can be extremely subtle.

Asking questions when we do not understand is a common form of giving and seeking feedback. An evaluative comment after a response also gives feedback. Another form of feedback is summarizing what has been said so far (for a more extensive treatment, see Grasha, 1978).

Whether you are attempting to summarize or make evaluations, feedback should be as specific as possible. It can be used as a checking device to ensure that each understands what has been said or what is implied by what has been said.

Without feedback of some kind the respondent can feel that the interviewer is not taking very much notice. However, feedback should be given only when wanted. It is very easy to

allow it to dominate the interview so that it becomes more a statement of the interviewer's views than the respondent's. Other indications of alertness, such as the use of eye contact, nodding to indicate attention or understanding, limited verbalizing such as 'huh-huh' and 'mm', all convey a great deal without interrupting the flow of the interview or imposing the interviewer's views upon the respondent.

PROBING

Probing always follows a previous question and its response in an attempt to obtain further information. It may seek detail where the first response gave a general reply, or seek a generalization derived from the specific details already given, it may seek some elaboration or qualification of a previous response, or it may provide an opportunity for the respondent to express attitudes when in the former response memory for facts or events was expected. The probe questions are never independent of either the previous question or the previous response.

Gorden (1969) identifies seven types of probe: the silent probe, encouragement, immediate elaboration, immediate clarification, retrospective elaboration, retrospective clarification, and mutation. These probes all help the interviewer to maintain control over the topic.

The silent probe is the pause — the interviewer merely waits until the respondent is ready to go on (see 'Speaking Skills', above). Encouragement includes all remarks, non-verbal noises and gestures, and verbal social facilitating phrases such as 'huh-huh', 'I see'. Mutation is using a following question in order to shift to a new topic. According to Gorden these are all types of probe, but many would not see them as having the same probing function as the other four types.

Elaboration and clarification are the main functions of probe questions. In the immediate types the probing questions relate to the immediately preceding responses, in the retrospective types the interviewer refers back to an earlier stage, reviewing what was said, i.e. giving feedback, in order to stimulate further thoughts about the topic.

Probe questions should be phrased in ways which assist respondents to recall or organize their thoughts. Use further

probes to verify the validity of the elaborated responses.

Express the probe question in phrasing which indicates that you have paid attention to what the respondent said previously. If you are referring back, use the respondent's own words, e.g. 'Earlier you said . . . Can you tell me more about . . .?' This type of probing produces a feedback loop structure as in Figures 5 and 6.

If the original question was a broad-range question a series of probe questions may gradually narrow the range; use a funnelling (Gorden, 1969) technique as in the branching structure with channelling effect of Figure 4. If the original questions were narrow-range questions a retrospective type of probe question can be used to tie the questions together as a group, and draw out relations between them to produce a constellated structure as in Figure 3.

Probing with retrospective recapitulation and open question formats can assist the respondent to tell the story again with greater detail. But whereas this helps recall of points missed the first time, there is also the possibility that the story will be filled in with incorrect or imagined detail in response to the need to make 'whole cloth' out of the incomplete fabric of what was initially recalled. Moreover, you should not probe with 'leading' questions which encourage this tendency in either the respondent or the interviewer.

Interpersonal Relations

Because of the face-to-face nature of the interviewing situation, interpersonal factors affect both interviewer and respondent. They can present many problems if not understood and controlled. People make judgements about each other which can affect what they will give as answers to questions, and an interview can produce little of value if a hostile relationship develops. However, it is not the interviewer's main purpose to be liked, it is to obtain information. Liking is useful only if instrumental to that purpose, although it may be intrinsically satisfying and highly motivating.

ESTABLISHING RAPPORT

The tone of the ensuing interpersonal relations is established in

the first few words used to arrange the interview. Favourable expectations should then be confirmed by favourable first impressions in the first minutes of the interview. It is not impossible to retrieve the relationship after a bad start, but it is difficult.

- Reveal the purpose of the interview as clearly and as openly as possible.
- Establish your credentials honestly without pretension or undue modesty.
- Present the interview as being of intrinsic interest but do not exaggerate its value either to yourself or to the respondent.
- Do not try to ingratiate yourself with the respondent by offering rewards for participation which cannot be substantiated.
- Pay attention to non-verbal indicators of your good intentions: set the respondent at ease with a pleasant smile, not a worried frown or grim expression.

EMPATHY

Empathy is one of the most valuable of interpersonal skills for an interviewer to develop and practise. It means being able to see things from the other person's point of view and to convey that understanding to that person. It does not necessarily mean that the interviewer agrees with the respondent's point of view. Empathy implies sensitivity to the other's needs and attitudes and ability to understand and act. It is often confused with sympathy but empathy is not merely being kind to or sorry for another. Its essential component is the concept of reciprocity, which is cognitive, involving thinking, interpreting, integrating, and trying to work out causal relationships from the point of view of the other.

This conceptual process leads to a tolerance of difference, and a readiness to withhold judgement on a person's motives and feelings which can sometimes be interpreted as 'sympathetic'. It leads also to a sensitivity to social and emotional cues given out by the respondent.

To cultivate an empathic interviewing style, you should try to think of how the respondent will interpret the question, of what possible interpretations there might be apart from the one which is most obvious to you. Think how you would answer the question if your views took the most extreme, contrasting pos-

itions. For example, to a question on birth control, consider how differently you would answer if you were a Roman Catholic, an activist in the Women's Liberation Movement, someone from a Third World Country, or an unmarried parent. Try to imagine how a person different from yourself would view this question, for example someone much older, someone much younger, or a person of the opposite sex.

Role Relationship

Many of the anxieties expressed by respondents in regard to interviews arise from their perceptions of the role relationship. This is less clear in non-directional than in directional interviews and can produce many problems for the research interviewer.

In the therapist–patient roles the respondent (the patient) may perceive the therapist as having greater power and it can be difficult for the therapist therefore to elicit responses which challenge that power or what the patient perceives the therapist as representing. The counsellor–client role may also be perceived in this way.

In research interviewing and opinion polling the respondent has the information which the interviewer wants. Yet often the fact that the interviewer may come from a large company or an institution such as a university can lead the respondent into attributing to the interviewer some of the role characteristics of the organization which the interviewer is seen as representing. Individual researchers who do not have institutional identification may therefore face difficulties in explaining their role to respondents. It is easy for them to be seen as prying individuals rather than as social scientists pursuing worthwhile social goals.

It is worth paying attention therefore to establishing one's role at the outset of the interview. This process has been referred to already as establishing one's credentials. As the interview proceeds and the objectives become clearer, role perceptions should become more accurate.

- Do not assume a personal or behavioural role which cannot be sustained honestly throughout the interview.
- Do not take advantage of a respondent who treats the research

interviewer as a power figure with potential influence over the respondent's behaviour.

- Do not step outside the interviewer role into that of an intimate personal friend.
- Do not try to impress the respondent with your superiority or at the other extreme adopt a servile role.
- Do stress the reciprocity of interviewer and respondent roles. Each must have something of value to contribute, otherwise the interview should not be taking place

Generating Confidence

From the respondent's point of view there are needs for anxieties to be allayed and for self-esteem to be enhanced by the interaction. Anxieties are allayed not by telling respondents that there is nothing to worry about but by giving them positive reasons to have confidence in the interviewer and themselves.

Good interviewing technique maintains the respondent's self-concept. Do not be destructive. If in the development of the interview information is elicited which is stressful and there is self-critical revelation, a way to restore self-esteem must be obtained by the end of the interview. It may be that the relationship will continue in further interviews, in which case this expectation can be used to point to favourable changes later, but it should not be used to promise what may be only a faint possibility.

Integrity in interpersonal relationships is essential. Pretensions will be quickly seen through by the respondent and reduce rather than increase the respondent's confidence in the interviewer.

The interviewer also needs to show confidence. Anxious, apparently fearful interviewers can produce anxious, fearful respondents. Confidence comes from paying attention to the details of management, developing the skills of speaking and listening, and knowing the purpose and content of the interview, but most of all from trying to develop an empathic style, more concerned for the respondent's view point than for one's own. As empathy develops, so mutual confidence will also develop between interviewer and respondent.

Personal Appearance and Mannerisms

People do make judgements on the basis of personal appearance and manners. If the main purpose of the interaction is to obtain information from the respondent, then behaviour and appearances which distract from that purpose should be avoided.

- Wear clothes that are not distracting — avoid extremes.
- Sit in a polite fashion — do not put your feet on the table or swing back on the respondent's furniture.
- Do not bend too close, or invade personal space.
- Do not try to adopt the manners, dress, speech, or hair style of respondents just to impress them that you are 'one of them' if you are not.

Style

Although in the previous pages of this chapter a long list of dos and don'ts has by now emerged, there remain many ways in which the interviewer can still retain an individual style. Individual differences in speech styles do not have to be sacrificed to meet the needs of clarity, nor will every interviewer have the same way of showing understanding. The aim is rather to develop one's own style so that it is both comfortable and competent.

The only way to judge its effectiveness is to examine the product. You may not even realize what your own style is until you see a videotape or hear a tape recording. It is a salutory experience but a valuable one, as long as you apply to yourself the caveat that criticism should not leave the self-concept in disarray — in this case your own — but lead to constructive efforts to make improvements.

Suggestions for Further Reading

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CHAPTER 5

Non-verbal Communi-cation

BY NORMAN F. KAFER

Earlier it was stressed that the interview is an interaction between two persons and that an affective relationship develops during that interaction. Indeed it is useful to view the interview in broader terms such as its similarity to an everyday encounter, such as when two strangers meet. This chapter examines more closely how persons communicate interpersonal attitudes in their everyday encounters, with particular reference to the role of non-verbal communication cues, and how these interpersonal processes can be used to facilitate the aims of the interview.

Everyday Social Encounters

Argyle (1983) has analysed the nature of the verbal and non-verbal communications that people use when they converse and interact in their everyday social encounters. He has noted that

interacting persons continually monitor each other's responses and use this feedback in order to synchronize or mesh their own behaviour, that is they modify individual interpersonal styles in response to each other. Meshing is more than simply finding a conversational topic of common interest. It is also balancing out how much each person talks and listens, the pace and length of each unit of conversation, turn taking, etc. Meshing is important, for when it occurs the interaction tends to be mutually rewarding. On the other hand, if one or other of the participants fails to mesh, strain develops. In general, strain leads to a breakdown in communication and often a termination of the encounter.

In our everyday social encounters we communicate in two ways: verbally and non-verbally. In the main, verbal communications are used to transmit the content of the message. However, our choice of words, the way requests are phrased, our spoken courtesy rituals, etc. can also communicate an attitude towards the other person. In addition the number of questions we ask, the facilitating responses we make, our conversation turn-taking techniques, the length of each unit of conversation, and so on are continually modified to allow us to interact with a minimum of strain. Non-verbal messages are used to support, clarify, and provide the syntax of our verbal responses. Thus we use gestures to complete or expand the meaning of an utterance. Eye gaze, head nods, and shifts in body position can indicate floor-yielding and turn-taking sequences. These sequences control the smoothness of the conversation. Changes in facial expressions are used to elicit feedback and to signal attentiveness and comprehension.

The interview is a special example of an everyday social encounter for its aims are more specific. In general the verbal content is prescribed and there is a structure which relies heavily on a question-and-answer approach. However, sensitivity to our own interaction techniques as well as those of the respondent is still very important. To facilitate the aims of the interview we need to continually monitor the verbal and non-verbal communications of the respondent and use this feedback to modify our own behaviours in order to ensure that the interaction proceeds smoothly.

Communication of an Interpersonal Attitude

Non-verbal communications serve another important function: the communication of interpersonal attitudes. When we interact with another person we not only communicate content but we also signal how we feel about that other person. Non-verbal responses are powerful communicators of attitudes and emotions. They provide information about how each person feels about the other: cold or warm, hostile or friendly, close or distant, dominant or submissive, etc. In our everyday social encounters we infer from the other person's body language — such as posture, proximity, gestures, eye gaze, and so on — an interpersonal attitude towards ourselves. At the same time of course the other person is interpreting our non-verbal responses.

It is readily apparent that accurate interpretation of a respondent's non-verbal responses is a useful means of controlling the outcome of an interview situation. In addition an awareness of the effect of our own non-verbal behaviours can help us develop a social climate conducive to the aims of the interview. In this way, the interviewer controls the nature of the developing relationship.

What are the non-verbal communicators which we need to be aware of? Ellis and Whittington (1981), Spence (1980), and Trower, Bryant, and Argyle (1978) have published comprehensive lists of techniques which are used in everyday social encounters. Their work suggests the importance of observing and assessing the following non-verbal aspects.

Facial expressions. The face is probably the most important source of information for inferring how a person feels. We look for movements and patterns of the eyes, eyebrows, and mouth, as described in Table 2.

Speech. Non-verbal aspects of speech are also important communicators of emotional states and attitudes towards others. Depression is often characterized by low pitch and a slow pace. On the other hand nervousness is often reflected in such speech qualities as a fast, uneven pace, raised pitch and a breathless voice (see also Chapter 4).

Table 2 **Facial Signals of Emotional State**

Emotional state	Facial signal
Anger	Eyes wide open, eyebrows lowered, mouth muscles tense
Surprise	Eyes wide open, eyebrows raised, mouth open and relaxed
Happiness	Eyes screwed up, eyebrows neutral, mouth elongated with corners up
Sadness	Eyes lowered, eyebrows down, mouth corners down
Boredom	Eyes and eyebrows neutral, mouth turned down
Fear	Eyes wide open, eyebrows raised, mouth open with corners drawn back
Self-satisfaction	Eyes closed up, eyebrows neutral, corners of the mouth up

Body posture. The way we stand or sit can also communicate our attitudes and feelings. For instance, an angry posture with fists clenched and the body in a tense forward position is markedly different from a friendly posture with hands open and the head and body in a relaxed forward position. In general we note the positioning of the arms, legs, shoulders, and overall posture. Inferences should be made in terms of the appropriateness of the posture to what is occurring at a particular time. Slouching with arms and legs splayed out could be interpreted as either a 'don't care' attitude or one of relaxation and ease. In the same way sitting upright with shoulders back either could be an indication of attentiveness and readiness to participate or a defensive pose. Cultural differences in body posture are also very great (see Chapter 6).

Gestures and body movements. Our gestures and body movements not only serve to emphasize and give additional information to the verbal messages but they also communicate feelings and attitudes. Excessive use of gestures, fiddling, and fidgeting movements may indicate nervousness, impatience, or boredom. Certain gestures such as a finger to the mouth, head nodding, foot or finger tapping, and shoulder shrugging convey additional emotional meaning.

The way we stand or sit can communicate our attitudes and feelings.

Eye gaze. During conversation eye contact is used to signal that the listener is interested and really listening. Thus infrequent use of eye contact can often be interpreted as boredom or lack of interest. Lack of eye contact may also indicate shame, embarrassment, unfriendliness, or guilt. On the other hand too much eye contact can make the other person feel uncomfortable and could be interpreted as aggression or dominance.

Physical appearance. Clothes and other aspects of our appearance, such as hair style or fashion, can also serve as non-verbal communicators. We know that different social situations set up different expectations as to how a person should dress and physically present the self. However we should also remember that such physical presentations of self also set up expectations in others as to how we shall behave in such social situations. Expectations concerning role, status, and power are communicated by these non-verbal cues.

Physical proximity. The distance people stand or sit from one another is an important indicator of how friendly they feel towards that person. However the appropriate distance depends to a large extent on the type of interaction: in certain cases sitting or standing too close may signify dominance or aggression; conversely a large physical distancing could indicate submission or timidity.

Psychological proximity. When spatial distancing is fixed, such as in a formal interviewing situation, the participants may use non-verbal behaviour in order to increase or decrease the psychological distance. Psychological distancing is often used to control the intimacy level of an interaction. Thus if one or other of the two participants feels that the interaction is becoming too personal he or she may compensate by sitting back further in the chair, reducing the amount of eye contact, or placing the arms in a defensive position. These responses may be signalling that the intimacy level should be changed. On the other hand they may allow the person to continue to converse about intimate topics and still maintain a tolerable psychological distance from the other person. In our everyday encounters we continually use such compensatory strategies. Two strangers may exchange courtesy pleasantries in a lift but reduce the intimacy

of the physical surroundings by attentively focusing their eyes on the floor indicator above their heads. Intimacy can also be increased by non-verbal cues that reduce the psychological distance.

Interpreting Non-verbal Communication Cues

It should be stressed that non-verbal communication cues can only be interpreted within the context of the total interview situation in which they occur. The verbal communication, the content of the interview, and even the physical environment in which the interview is conducted are also important variables. Our concern in the interview is to assess the extent to which strain is present during the interaction and how much more information can be gathered from the non-verbal communication responses. Therefore, in interpreting non-verbal cues it is useful to ask ourselves the following questions: How appropriate are the cues at this particular point in the interview? Are the verbal and non-verbal messages congruent? To what extent are the non-verbal cues telling me that I am not achieving the aims of the interview? Are the non-verbal cues indicating resistance, defensiveness, evasiveness? To what extent are the non-verbal cues indicative of the person's general interpersonal style rather than an outcome of particular aspects of the interview? How can I modify my own non-verbal behaviour in order to reduce strain?

There is a number of factors which can affect the accuracy of our interpretations. These are individual differences, developmental patterns, and the resolution of conflicting messages.

Individual differences. The non-verbal communication behaviours which we use are learned and are part of our repertoire of social skills. Therefore there are individual differences in the way persons use the non-verbal communicators. Some people are socially unskilled and behave as though they have not fully acquired the appropriate use of non-verbal cues. Others may have the skills, but because of other factors such as anxiety or shyness are unable to use them. The behaviour of both kinds of people can often be misinterpreted.

For instance (Kafer, 1984a), Marion is shy and finds it difficult to meet new people. She tends to stand back a little when

approached, to give very little eye contact, and masks many of her emotional expressions. Often people she meets misread her non-verbal communication as disinterest in their friendly overtures.

On the other hand, Alice also finds difficulty in meeting new people. When approached by strangers, she tends to talk louder and more often, stands too close, and frowns and giggles at inappropriate times. She is often viewed as pushy or aggressive.

Non-verbal communication by children. Not only is our non-verbal behaviour learned but it also appears that some non-verbal responses are used more often by children at certain age levels than others (Kafer, 1983; Kafer, 1984b; Mayo & La France, 1978). Therefore, in interviewing children developmental changes need to be taken into account.

Between four and six years of age, children are rapidly developing the skills necessary for meshing interpersonal interactions. Thus we can observe preschool children initiating interactions, modifying their speech units, and demonstrating turn-taking and floor-yielding techniques. However they have yet to develop fully the ability to encode (emit) and decode (interpret) emotional cues accurately. This ability is not fully acquired until about the age of nine to 12 years. During this learning period emotional cues can be easily misinterpreted by the child. On the other hand the young child has not yet learned the display rules associated with the expression of emotion, that is the exaggeration or masking of certain emotions according to the social situation. Therefore, often, the young child's feelings are easily interpreted.

It is interesting to note that as adults we often unconsciously modify our own non-verbal behaviour when talking to young children. For instance the young child tends to maintain high eye contact and stands very close. Thus when we talk to children four and five years old, we also maintain high eye contact and stand very close. On the other hand our behaviour with a 12-year-old is more like what we use with an adult.

Conflicting messages. In our everyday social encounters we often receive conflicting messages. A person says one thing and his or her body language says something different. It appears that when verbal and non-verbal messages conflict we tend to

disregard the verbal and react to the non-verbal (Argyle, Salter, Nicholson, Williams, & Burgess, 1970; Bugenthal, Kaswan, & Love, 1970). This general tendency to react more to the visual than to the vocal may lead to misinterpretation. Does the conflict stem from attempts to increase psychological distance? Does transmission of the verbal message generate anxiety or fear? Therefore care should be taken to make a decision about which message is one of self-presentation and which reflects the attitudinal meaning.

This chapter has examined the interview situation in terms of its similarity to an everyday social encounter. The importance of observing and interpreting non-verbal communication cues has been stressed. Such observation and interpretation provide a useful means of assessing the accuracy of the information gained in the interview. It has also suggested a number of social techniques which the interviewer can use in order to develop a social climate conducive to the aims of the interview.

CHAPTER 6

Some Difficult Cases

In this chapter we turn to some situations in which the interviewer needs to be especially alert and sensitive to the needs of the respondent. In each of these situations the respondent presents some difficulty to the interviewer. We shall deal with seven common sources of difficulty experienced by interviewers: respondent hostility, respondent anxiety, extreme acquiescence in the respondent, extreme status discrepancy between respondent and interviewer, extreme age discrepancy between respondent and interviewer, problems of language, and problems arising from differences in cultural background.

Hostile Respondents

Hostility to the interviewer is the most common form of difficulty experienced by interviewers. It takes many forms both overt and covert and has to be overcome if the answers to the interviewer's questions are to be relied upon.

Hostility to the interviewer may derive from any of many sources and the one which triggers off the hostile response may not be obvious. The interviewer may not be personally the cause of the hostility although the recipient of it.

Hostility to the situation can occur when the respondent agrees to the interview with reluctance only after heavy persuasion by the interviewer. There is likely to be some hostility in the answers, at least at the beginning of the interview, because the respondent sees the interviewer as having scored some ascendance over the respondent in the interaction and sees him or her self as the loser in the exchange. Because the interviewer is the one who is in control of the situation, the respondent spills this resentment over into the interview itself. In these circumstances the reliability of the responses is in doubt and all replies must be checked carefully for their veracity by further probing. Unfortunately this may serve to fan the flames of hostility when it becomes apparent to the respondent that the answers are not accepted at face value.

Hostility to the topic of the interview may flow through to the respondent's attitude to the interviewer. A typical example of this situation is when the topic is in a socially taboo area of behaviour, for instance if opinion is sought on various forms of sexual aberration. The respondent feels uncomfortable with the subject matter and expresses hostility through aggressive remarks, or quite frequently in the case of a topic with sexual content through risqué jokes and double entendre. The same type of reaction can occur in regard to any sensitive issue where the respondent perceives an implicit threat to entrenched norms and values.

Hostility to the interview may arise because of the competing demands of other activities. When the housewife says she cannot spare the time for the interview because she has a cake in the oven that may well be the case, yet many interviewers would be less inclined to believe her than they would a business executive who said he was too busy. Either intentionally or not, they make their attitude apparent. The housewife who perceives this yet nevertheless then consents to the interview may do the interview but with much pent-up hostility.

Hostility towards the implications of the question content can arise from factors in the design of the interview, for example, if there is bias in the form of the questions, and from the respondent's biases in regard to the answers. We have dealt with these in an earlier chapter. The respondent will show hostility if the interviewer persists in a line of questioning which

either takes no account of the respondent's already expressed attitudes or appears to reject them. We see many examples of the deliberate use of this type of arousal of hostility in television interviews with political figures.

The respondent may be angry at an injustice, or frustrated by inability to achieve some goal. The source of anger is not the interviewer, nor is the content of the interview at fault, but a pervasive emotional state tends to colour the answers to questions on any topic.

Dealing with Hostile Respondents

One of the most common reactions of people who are the target of what they regard as unjustified hostility is to respond in kind, and it is difficult for interviewers not to do likewise. As a strategy for combating respondent hostility, however, it is almost never successful, for it leads almost exclusively to a similar response from the other, and an antagonistic relationship quickly develops.

Another common response to perceived hostility is to try to defuse it by trying to reassure the hostile person that their hostility is misplaced. This is likely to have the effect of irritating the other person more than ever. If the hostility was previously directed to the situation or the issue, it now becomes diverted to the interviewer, who will then become linked personally with the failure to reassure. Typical examples of reassurance that does not reassure are phrases such as 'You really shouldn't worry so much about that, it doesn't matter that much', or 'Things are not as bad as you think', or 'You are making a fuss about nothing'.

A far more effective way of dealing with the hostile respondent is to use cognitive restructuring. The interviewer can attempt to recast the situation by attending to different features. The interviewer does not try to fob off the respondent's hostility, but treats it as an expected and natural reaction to the circumstances which have given rise to the respondent's feelings — for example, 'Yes, I can see why you would be annoyed . . .' The interviewer must beware of being patronizing, and of expressing a belief or understanding which he or she does not have.

The essentials of the cognitive restructuring approach are to attempt to find out the cause of the hostility, then to consider what can be done to remove its influence on the quality of the responses and the relationship between interviewer and respondent.

It is important that the interviewer obtains the respondent's point of view without becoming carried away by the tide of hostility, even if the anger appears to be justified. The interviewer needs to maintain a degree of objectivity. To achieve this it is necessary to distance oneself sufficiently from the issue to be able to consider the respondent's hostility calmly.

The interviewer must not promise what cannot be delivered. It must not be suggested that participating in the interview will assist in redressing a wrong if in fact the interviewer does not know whether it will or not. It is difficult to resist this temptation to allay the anger of a hostile respondent, but its effect is the same as giving reassurance rather than reasons.

The most effective strategy is to place the accent on objectively verifiable content, actions, and 'facts', making it clear to the respondents that they will be given an opportunity to express their own feelings separately afterwards. Having said that, the interviewer must not omit to do so.

Anxious Respondents

One of the most common situations is that of anxiety in the respondent. The possible causes are many. Use of a tape recorder can raise anxiety at the thought of 'performing' as in a radio or TV interview. There may be a sense of guilt, fear of not doing well as a result of previous failure in social interaction, or intention to deceive. At the beginning of an interview you probably do not know what is the underlying source and must proceed without expecting to find out.

Dealing with Anxious Respondents

Take plenty of time to establish rapport and to allow the anxious respondent to get used to the interviewer. The respondent may find face-to-face interaction difficult and looks away from the interviewer, gazes at the ceiling, or looks out the

window. Do not become annoyed if you are unable to maintain eye contact. The respondent may interpret your efforts to do so as attempts to dominate. Be prepared to wait until eye contact is established. But consider whether eye contact is necessary to begin with. One can begin less threateningly without eye contact.

If the respondent speaks very softly, almost inaudibly, frequent urging to 'speak up' will only aggravate the anxiety. Listen very carefully. Try not to interrupt when hard-to-get details are being given. Use a tape recorder or other supporting means of recording if possible.

Begin with the easier aspects of the topic to give plenty of early encouragement, and give feedback early to test that your interpretation of the responses is correct. This also gives the respondent the opportunity to review progress. If given in an encouraging way it will assist the respondent to see that his anxiety is decreasing.

The anxious respondent may not speak clearly, mumbling, mixing words, mispronouncing words, and mixing up sentences or phrases. Minor speech problems will be accentuated. Try to work out what the respondent is trying to express, but beware of misinterpreting as it will be easy to miss the meaning. Be patient if speech difficulties occur.

Anxiety leads many people to talk too much. Try to sift the relevant from the verbiage. Releasing pent-up anxieties can lead to a flood of talking. Try to get the main points, and be prepared to fill in the details later. Try not to interrupt.

An anxious respondent may have difficulty in putting thoughts together in a logical, coherent fashion. Many memory gaps are likely. Do not provide a logical structure which is that of the interviewer rather than that of the respondent, especially if all the relevant facts have not been revealed.

Pay attention to the respondent's physical comfort. Do not adopt an aggressive body position. Place the respondent and interviewer in an around-the-corner position rather than directly opposite each other.

Leave something handy for the respondent to pick up and fiddle with. Small items such as a pencil and drawing pad for doodling, paper clips, eraser, or rubber ball can all serve the purpose. In extreme cases projective or fantasy approaches may

Leave something handy for the respondent to pick up and fiddle with.

be useful; however these cases will be more likely to occur in therapeutic interviewing. Projective play is effective with extremely anxious child respondents.

Do not seat the respondent in a chair which is not the right size, or is too spindly, or too high off the ground. Choose a comfortable chair but not a couch or bean bag so comfortable or floppy that the respondent may 'turn off' altogether.

An anxious respondent is highly distractible. Avoid distractions, asides and irrelevancies. If possible do not conduct the interview in a cluttered, fussy, or noisy environment. Avoid interruptions from other people, and give the respondent your whole attention.

Take the emphasis away from the person and place it on the content of the interview. Show empathy rather than sympathy or verbal reassurance. Waiting builds up anxiety further — they may run away — so be ready to start.

Extreme Acquiescence: The Too Agreeable Respondent

After coping with the hostile and the anxious, the interviewer is likely to feel a great sense of relief if the next respondent is a person who is extremely easy to talk to. It may take some time before the interviewer begins to have an uneasy feeling that this very agreeable respondent is actually avoiding the questions rather than answering them. In some cases this may be deliberate, but frequently it will be found later to be an unconscious defence against coming to grips with something unpleasant.

Another case is that of the respondent who is more interested in the interview as a social occasion than as an occasion for the exchange of information. For many people the interview fills a need for company and the respondent tries to be as agreeable as possible to the temporary guest.

The too agreeable respondent never presents as a hostile or anxious person, never raises contrary arguments or takes opposing attitudes, but agrees with everything the interviewer says. If the interviewer suggests something which is contrary to what has already been said, the too agreeable respondent does not object but agrees with the second point of view just as readily as the first one. The more the interviewer tries to pin the respondent down on a particular point, the more agreeably the respondent shifts ground. There appears to be more concern with being liked than with the content of either the question or the answers.

Yet another type is the respondent who seems to see everything through rose-coloured glasses. It is difficult to elicit any critical comment or harsh evaluation, no matter what the situation actually may be. Sometimes it is difficult to tell whether the respondent is unable to understand the full meaning of the subject under discussion or just does not want to.

Consider the following example. An interviewer has been asking a mother about the behaviour of her son who is in trouble with the police for theft and violence. The boy is the leader of a teenage gang which has had a long history of clashes with authority.

Interviewer: The charge against your son is a very serious one, Mrs X. I see he has been in some trouble before.

What do you think about your son's record?

Respondent: Oh, Johnny is really a good boy — always helping me. Helps others a lot too. He's popular with the other boys too. You can tell that because his friends are always coming round looking for him to go out and have some fun. They look up to him too. He's quite a leader, I think.

In this excerpt the mother never actually refers to the charges of theft and violence. She avoids the reality by trying to divert the discussion to the way the son helps her. She turns the negative idea of gang leadership into the positive idea of popularity, and gives an innocent interpretation of the phrase 'have some fun' which will contain no suggestion at all of anything unpleasant having occurred.

Dealing With the Too Agreeable Respondent

Extremely acquiescent respondents generally respond to the interviewer's paying attention to the respondent's need for positive feedback. They want to know that they are doing what is required of them. Hence it is important for the interviewer to assist them to understand their task in such a way that it is made clear that they will not be lowered in the interviewer's esteem if they present contrary views. As in the case of the hostile respondent, it is not reassurance that is needed but cognitive restructuring.

In dealing with the socially oriented respondent the interviewer's task is to turn the direction of the interaction away from a person orientation to a content orientation. It will be useless to remonstrate. The interviewer will have more success if the two orientations can be linked in a positive way.

Try to show how the relationship between respondent and interviewer is enhanced through paying attention to the subject matter of the interview, and stress the interdependence of interviewer and respondent through their mutual participation on a joint task in which each has an important and valuable contribution to make. Stress the value to the relationship of thoughtful, truthful responses, and indicate that the effort in thinking out the reply is recognized and appreciated.

Express a recognition of the worth of the respondent in the

respondent role, but avoid evaluations of personal worth in relation to areas of behaviour not closely related to the subject of the interview.

In dealing with the respondent who appears to see the world through rose-coloured glasses the interviewer must remember that avoiding the harsh realities is a sign of insecurity. So, you must not increase feelings of inadequacy by harsh remonstrances. Nor should you reinforce the effectiveness of the respondent's avoidance tactics by pleas to answer the question and cease avoiding the issue.

Be patient. If the issue is important, give the respondents time to say what they want to in their own way before pursuing specific questions. This will of course be the approach in counselling interviews, but it will prove effective in other types of interviewing also.

Take care to phrase the question so that the opportunity to avoid an answer is not built into the question itself. In the example, the interviewer has given the mother the opening for her interpretation by the form the open-ended question has taken. Although in the lead-in the interviewer has specifically referred to the charges, when the question is put it is phrased in general terms, thus giving the mother the opportunity to reply with the avoiding response. By repeating the reference to the charges and using more specific wording the interviewer can reduce the available options and hence the likelihood of the respondent's diversionary tactics meeting with success.

High Status Respondents

Discrepancies between the perceived status of the respondent and the interviewer are a potential source of difficulty if the interviewer feels inadequate on the one hand or adopts an overbearing or condescending manner on the other.

The difference in status need not of itself make an interview difficult when there is a shared acceptance of the relative positions of interviewer and respondent. For example, when a junior member of a social welfare agency has to approach a senior member of the government department responsible for administering the welfare program of the agency, the difference in status will be recognized by both, and there will also be a

knowledge of the politeness norms operating in the context of the organization. Difficulties are much more likely to arise if either one of the two does not recognize the difference, does not accept the level of expertise of the other, does not associate the level of expertise with a level of social status, or is not familiar with the prevailing politeness norms.

One of the most difficult aspects of interviewing people of very high status is obtaining the interview. Because it is generally necessary to arrange for an appointment well beforehand there is time to prepare. However waiting can reduce the interviewer's motivation and affect the apparent spontaneity of the questioning. High status people often claim that they have very little time to give the interviewer, which interviewers often attribute to lack of interest, hostility, arrogance, avoidance of difficult issues, or an attempt to appear more important than they actually are. Sometimes these interpretations are correct, but the lack of time can still be the case.

Dealing with High Status Respondents

It is pointless to dwell on the attitude of the respondent to the interviewer. This serves only to heighten any sense of inferiority from which the interviewer may be suffering. The more effective course is to emphasize the purpose and subject matter of the interview and de-emphasize the interpersonal relationship between interviewer and respondent.

Keep to the purpose which was stated in the request for the interview. It will soon become apparent if another topic is introduced, and if this new topic is one which would not have been acceded to had it been mentioned in the request for the interview, the result can be disastrous for the remainder of the interview and for any other interviewers who might follow.

Establish the interviewer's credentials when the respondent's permission for the interview is being sought. The credentials are those relating to expertise and integrity.

Courtesy is essential. Do not presume intimacy by the use of informal titles, language style, or manner of dress and non-verbal behaviour.

Skilled people generally appreciate skill in others. Extreme subservience and acquiescence are not effective attitudes for

interviewers, nor are arrogant styles which arouse hostility and do not reduce status differences.

Humble Respondents

Sometimes the interviewer is seen as having power to an extent which makes the respondent behave in an extremely humble manner. The effect on the respondent is somewhat like that described in regard to the acquiescent respondent, with the additional factor that in this case the inequality of the relationship becomes a major motivating force. The result is bias in the responses. The respondent will hesitate to say anything unsafe and so it may become difficult for the interviewer to elicit elaborated replies. The necessity for continued probing to obtain the required information only serves to make the respondent feel more insecure and inadequate.

Taking the emphasis away from the person and shifting it to the content will be effective only if the content is not the source of the respondent's inadequacy. It will be important to show that the person has the respect of the interviewer and that he will be listened to carefully. Techniques for doing this have been described in Chapter 4.

Age Discrepancies: Interviewing the Very Young and the Very Old

Age and status are related, but in Australian society they are not synonymous. Two cases of age discrepancies in which many interviewers experience difficulty are when talking with the very young and the very old.

INTERVIEWING YOUNG CHILDREN

The first problem in interviewing young children is to gain their attention. The next is to keep it. They have a limited attention span and can be highly distractible. They are also limited in their vocabulary, their understanding of complex sentence structures, their general understanding, and their memory.

They can respond with warmth and enthusiasm to an interviewer who shows a real interest in what they have to say, but they can be quick to react negatively to those who adopt an

authoritarian or over-directive manner. At times their naïveté makes them refreshingly unpredictable. With always a surprising response in store, the skilful interviewer of young children can learn much from their interpretation of everyday events.

Their vivid imaginations can colour their verbal reports with fantasy in which the real and the imagined weave in and out in a moving parade. If unaware of these tendencies the interviewer can be misled into reporting a child as 'telling untruths', being unreliable, and so on.

Take time to establish rapport. Do not begin until you are sure that the child is ready. It may take longer to get started than with an adult. If the interviewer begins by allowing the child to play with some toys or enters into games with the child, it may be difficult to switch the child's interest to the questions. Do not try to do this abruptly but gradually lead the conversation into the topic.

Come down to the child's level physically. The child's view of the world is somewhere between the knees and waist of an adult. Seated, the child's view is of the adult's neck and chest. Do not always look down on the child but come down to the child's level for face-to-face contact. Practise sitting on a low chair and working at a low table until the position ceases to be awkward. If you change position do not stand up or move to a half-standing position as the child may think that the interview is at an end. It may be hard to establish rapport and pick up the thread again.

Give the child something to do as well as talking. Fantasy approaches and projective and symbolic play with dolls, pictures, drawing, and felt picture shapes on a felt board can all be used. For interviews of an information-gathering rather than therapeutic type it will be better that these activities are task-directed, i.e. relevant to the content of the interview. If required they can be structured to follow the sequence of the questioning.

Language must be simple and straightforward. Use concrete rather than abstract terms and concepts, and choose vocabulary at the right level. It is better if it is too simple rather than too hard for the child to know the words. If a term which is a key concept for the interview is a difficult one, make sure that it is defined in words the child understands before proceeding

Interviewing the Very Young

with the questions. After the initial sentences introducing the idea, the child can be encouraged to supply his own ideas as to the meaning of the word. For example, if the child is being interviewed about his leisure-time activities, this term is clearly too difficult for most young children. Instead, first ask about what he does when he is not at school and not asleep in bed. Ask whether any of the named activities are 'work'. Ask which are work. Then ask whether any of the named activities are play, and which ones are play. Do not be concerned with the repetition. Do not offer alternatives, but take one after another giving equal emphasis. In this example it is quite possible that for the child the two categories will not be mutually exclusive and if required to choose from two alternatives, both of which apply, the child may become confused and be unable to answer.

Keep to simple grammatical structures. Avoid the hypothetical (if), the subjunctive (may, might), dependent clauses, rhe-

torical questions. Begin the sentence with the main theme, not with dependent phrases or clauses.

Divide up the questions into information chunks of small size and simple structure. Allow for the child's level of conceptualization. Use a larger number of short questions rather than one longer more complex question. Avoid double-barrelled questions.

Take account of the child's level of cognitive development. The Piagetian stages of pre-operational, concrete operational, concrete general, and formal operational thought provide a good guide for judging the appropriate logical levels to expect. If you are unsure of the child's level, one or more of the standard Piagetian conservation tasks can be used to determine a baseline. (See for example, Ginsburg & Opper, 1979, for an outline of these tasks and the associated cognitive levels.)

Keep the interview short. A 10-minute interview can be very tiring for a young child, especially if 'hard' thinking is required as with Piagetian testing, dealing with a topic the child has not considered before, or when it is a problem area such as in questioning about the death or the absence of a parent. Provide sufficient breaks if the child is tiring, and allow for the child's shorter attention span.

To reduce distractibility keep all recording apparatus, interview schedules, and personal belongings out of the child's way. Do not leave other items about on the table, floor, etc. if it is intended that the child should neither use nor notice them.

Attractive surroundings are helpful, but need not be elaborately decorated. If unsure, ask a child, not an adult, what is 'nice' or 'not nice' about the room. Many children are frightened by the content of pictures which are fanciful or surrealist. Check on children's interpretations of the content of pictures before providing them either as stimulus material or background decoration.

The use of rewards can be a contentious issue. In general it is better not to use the promise of a reward for participating in the interview. Ideally the content of the interview should be interesting, and hence motivating, for the child. However, if it is thought necessary to promise a reward, all of what is expected to earn the reward must be made clear to the child at the beginning. The conditions must not be changed part-way

through, and the reward must be given if promised. On most occasions it should be unnecessary.

Punishments are quite inappropriate for interviewing children. Do not scold the child for misbehaving but try to seek the cause and remedy it. If the cause lies in the interviewer's techniques, change them to more suitable procedures.

INTERVIEWING THE VERY OLD

Some old people make interviewers feel very young and inexperienced. It is not always apparent why they have this effect upon the interviewer, although sometimes it may seem to be a deliberate attempt to put the interviewer at a disadvantage. Probably the interviewer actually needs little to bring to the fore a hitherto vague feeling of anxiety in regard to how to treat the older respondent.

Some interviewers have a feeling of superiority in relation to the aged because of their physical frailty, and find it difficult not to feel impatient with their apparent inattentiveness and inability to keep to the point. Some old respondents reinforce these feelings by adopting a submissive or weak pose, the embodiment of learned helplessness.

Perhaps the most frequent reaction is one of frustration. The physical disabilities such as hearing loss and eyesight deficiencies can easily be confused with a loss of mental alertness. The reality is that among the aged the whole range of human variability is to be found, and although the interviewer will meet some older respondents who are exceedingly difficult to communicate with, there are many older respondents who are interesting, alert, intelligent, sympathetic, kind, and even wise, and as encouraging and stimulating to interviewers as they could wish any respondent to be. What then are the main difficulties in interviewing the aged, and why should interviewers approach such interviews with some trepidation?

Appearances are not on the side of the aged. The interviewer may have to overcome a sense of distaste at the old person's bent figure, wrinkled features, and discoloured skin. There is undoubtedly the unspoken question in the mind of interviewers about whether they too will one day be like this, and perhaps an unwillingness to accept the answer to that question.

The very old are often 'a little deaf', that is just deaf enough

to make it necessary to speak more loudly than normally and to have to repeat oneself frequently. There is no doubt that constantly saying the same thing twice can become rather wearing. It is hard to discuss confidential matters or follow complex problems through when one is shouting. Often the respondent is deafer on one side than the other and it can take some time to find which is the better side. The respondents do not always offer this information straight away.

The need to maintain eye contact may not always be attainable with the very old who have eyesight problems. Many interviewers will feel uncomfortable when the respondent peers too closely, thus invading personal space, or gazes too intently on the interviewer's face.

As the very old are not as mobile as younger people, the interviewer must go to where the respondent feels comfortable. If this is a favourite chair on a nursing home verandah, for example, the interview may have to proceed with others present. In such cases the interviewer may not be able to judge the extent to which others are listening in on the interview, a particularly awkward situation when the respondent is hard of hearing.

The forgetfulness of many old people can be very disconcerting to the interviewer. In the middle of an interview they can completely change the subject, they can forget who the interviewer is and what the interview is about, and can be calmly unaware that they did. They may call the interviewer by several different names in the course of the interview. Many interviewers cannot tell whether they are doing this deliberately to be obstructive or not.

Old people can be both crotchety and proud, expecting others to do things for them on the one hand yet appearing to resent any interference with their independence on the other. Such a combination of helplessness and obstinacy can present a paradox to interviewers who do not have experience in dealing with the aged.

To the young it may appear that the old will not face up to the reality of their disabilities, but to the person who lives with disability the extent of disablement does not seem as great as it does to the observer. They see their limitations as relative, and compare themselves with others with greater misfortunes.

The over-solicitous attitudes of active young people only serve to accentuate their disabilities and are resented. The typical reaction is an irascible reply, such as 'Don't fuss me, I can get it myself, thank you', when the young interviewer tries to get the cushion or the walking-stick. In return the respondent is seen as ungrateful, unpredictable, bad-tempered or bad-mannered, and the interviewer begins to perceive the old person as a hostile respondent.

DEALING WITH OLD PEOPLE IN INTERVIEWS

Old people want respect and consideration but not condescension. These attitudes will show through if the interviewer is sincere. However, the minor losses of hearing, eyesight, and memory do require interviewers to adjust their approach. The following suggestions will assist in achieving a comfortable relationship when you are interviewing the aged.

To overcome hearing difficulties try to find a place where there is not a great amount of movement and background noise. One of the drawbacks of hearing aids is that they do not discriminate among the sounds which they amplify, consequently it is necessary to reduce the competing noise as much as possible. The advantages for maintaining the respondent's attention and privacy are considerable.

Interviewers with light voices will find raising the voice a continuing strain on the voice, and that the voice will rise to a high pitch as they attempt to speak more loudly. To increase the volume, try to drop the voice rather than raise it.

Do not rely on hearing alone, but have the questions written or printed in large letters on cards and use them in association with the spoken word. Hold the card so that the respondent can see it easily without physical discomfort.

Test the situation to find which is the respondent's 'best' side before commencing the question. One interviewer reports how she puts a stool or chair on either side, then places the interview cards on one and sits on the other. If she finds herself on the 'good' side she retrieves the cards, but if she finds herself on the 'bad' side she can move over to where her cards have been placed.

Repeating the question affects both the respondent and the interviewer. Choose a different way of phrasing the question to

give some variety and to reduce the appearances of failure, but make sure that the equivalence of the two forms of the question has been established previously, preferably by empirical testing. The onus is on the interviewer to maintain the motivation of the respondent.

Keeping the respondent to the topic can be a challenge to the interviewer's skill. When the respondent strays from the point, try to redirect the discussion by repeating the question in a different way, or taking a particular aspect of the response and asking the respondent to elaborate on that. These techniques have been discussed in an earlier chapter.

Independence can be very precious to those whose independence is increasingly threatened. Advancing physical disability and living under institutional regimes may give the aged person little opportunity to exert independence of action or decision, so it becomes quite important to them to show as much independence in little things as they can. It is also important that their independence is recognized, so it sometimes appears that the old person is making much ado about nothing. Before dismissing these behaviours as petty, you should consider their function in the total context rather than in isolation.

Often an older respondent suddenly refuses to cooperate in the course of the interview or when the interview is just about to begin, even though agreement was previously obtained. The interview immediately changes from easy to difficult. Others are difficult from the outset: nothing is right for them, and they disagree with everything the interviewer says, no matter what it is. To what extent this apparent crankiness in the aged is a function of advancing age or a long-term personality characterisic is often hard for interviewers to judge unless they have known the respondent for a long time. Whatever the cause, the outcome in behaviour is the same. To deal with the cranky respondent the first requirement is to be calm. Do not allow yourself to become angry with the respondent. Patience will be needed. Keep in mind that it is also quite likely that the outburst of crankiness will be followed be an about-face in which such respondents will be just as cooperative and concerned for the interviewer as they were difficult before.

The reason for the change may escape the interviewer, though it may be clear to the respondent. It could be that

A taste for tea is well worth cultivating.

initial fears are now seen as unfounded. Many older respondents are wary of talking to anyone they cannot account for, fearing that person might be seeking information in order to do something potentially upsetting to the old person's way of life. Too often such interviews are associated with threats such as possible revisions of pension entitlements, increases in their contributions to nursing home fees, or placement in a nursing home. It is important therefore that the true purpose of the interview is clearly and honestly explained. Check that the respondent does understand the purpose of the interview before proceeding with the questions. Be courteous, calm, and not condescending. Treat the respondent as an individual, not simply as an old person. Expect the unexpected.

The interview can be a pleasant social occasion, and for many old people may be a rare opportunity to meet someone different. The interviewer has a reciprocal responsibility to participate in this social interaction, especially if the interviewer has requested the interview, which is usually the case. Do not

wind up the visit too abruptly. Post-interview informal social interaction can also play its part in tying up loose ends, and because of the change in relationship, might bring out information which was not forthcoming previously. Because the respondent is now the host and the interviewer the guest, the respondent may feel more in charge of the situation and can now ask the questions. The respondent often volunteers what could not easily be expressed as a response to the interviewer's questions. The interviewer can learn much from these informal moments which will help him understand old people better. A taste for tea is well worth cultivating.

Interviewing Across Cultures

In multicultural Australia today the interviewer may frequently have to interview people whose cultural background and native language are different from his own. Interviewers may themselves belong to an ethnic minority. It cannot be denied that interviewing across cultures can be a source of many problems for both interviewers and respondents.

Language is usually cited as the greatest problem, although language differences are often blamed for failures to communicate which actually have their origins in other culturally based differences. No less important are the social demands and role relationship in the interview situation. There are also the special problems which arise when an interpreter is brought into the relationship.

To many recently arrived non-English-speaking migrants the use of an interpreter is essential. However, the interviewer would be wise to use a written schedule of questions and have these available for the respondent to refer to if needed. The schedule should be back-translated. This means that the questions should first be translated into the respondent's language and then from that translated version back into English, by another, independent translator, before the questioning proceeds. This procedure is time-consuming but it is much more reliable than depending solely on the interpreter to pick up the intended meaning without distortion. It is usually the case that there is greater mastery of reading in a foreign language than there is of speaking in it, so the schedule of questions can often

Interviewing across cultures using an interpreter.

The interviewer should always address the respondent, not the interpreter. The interpreter should be seated in a position between and slightly behind the interviewer and respondent, but out of their direct line of sight.

be used as an aid to the respondent in following the interviewer's intentions. To many people a written version will also appear to have more authenticity than an interpreter's subjective on-the-spot translation.

Another advantage of not relying entirely on the spoken word is that in communities in which there are divisions amongst themselves the written schedule is less likely to be regarded as reflecting the biases of one group toward another. It has been shown in one study of the interpreter's role (Mills, 1983) that there is a tendency for interpreters to be drawn from marginal rather than from representative groups, and in some cases they were found not to belong to the culture at all. Many people are wary of speaking frankly in such circumstances. Before you use an interpreter, therefore, it is important to ensure that the interpreter's background, dialect or language style, and ethnic identity are acceptable to the respondent.

Other relevant factors which can influence the effectiveness of using an interpreter are the content of the interview and the sex of the interviewer, respondent, and interpreter. These factors interact with each other. The sex of the interviewer influences the responses especially if the content of the interview touches on personal matters, for example matters of personal hygiene, relations between husband and wife, or other aspects of sexual behaviour. The presence of an interpreter inhibits the discussion even further. There is a further interaction effect if one of the three is not of the same sex as the other two. Another instance of the effect of content is if the content has relevance to issues which are the basis of a cultural schism. An example of the latter would be questioning which referred to political or religious differences between the two groups in the country of origin, as in the case of Lebanon, or the dispute between Iraq and Iran. Whereas the best interpreter available may have skill in the appropriate languages, the choice would be restricted to those with acceptable allegiances.

If an interpreter is used, make sure that the privacy of the respondent is not unnecessarily invaded. Check that the interpretation is correct by seeking feedback frequently. Cross-check responses by comparing with answers to previous questions. Make sure that the respondent understands the function of the interpreter from the outset. Do not begin the interview

until you are satisfied that both the respondent and the interpreter accept and understand each other's roles. The interviewer should always address the respondent, not the interpreter. The interpreter should be seated or standing in a position between and slightly behind the interviewer and respondent, but out of their direct line of sight.

If the respondent has some understanding of English but is not really fluent, there may be several reasons for the interviewer nevertheless wishing to conduct the interview in English. An interpreter may not be available, or the respondent may prefer to struggle on in English rather than have an interpreter present. More probably, the interviewer may not be fully aware of the extent of the language handicap until the interview has progressed some way and the failure to communicate has affected both the respondent and questioner. Frequent repetitions of the questions will be necessary, the responses will be brief and the ideas unelaborated, and many answers may have a bizarre quality about them. The reason for this is that the answers are not the answers to the questions. Because such respondents have not really understood the questions, they guess what they are about, and often guess wrongly. People of many Asian cultures, for example, would hesitate to ask the interviewer to repeat the question for fear of embarrassing the interviewer and, therefore, also themselves. In many cultures it is more important to maintain smooth social interactions than to get to the correct interpretation of a speaker's meaning. Cultures vary greatly in the degree to which they attribute importance to these two needs.

To reduce language difficulties a number of techniques are available. The key is to realize that what is easy in one language is not necessarily easy in another. Idiomatic expressions are the most difficult to use correctly in another language, and are open to the greatest degree of misunderstanding by the non-native speaker. The experience of one overseas student, recounted some time later, may serve to illustrate this point. Newly arrived from Malaysia with what he thought was a reasonable command of English, the result of years of education in excellent English-medium schools, he was astonished when his hosts proposed that they would 'pick him up, run him over, and drop him down' at the hostel where he was to live. The

hosts could see the confusion on his face but had no idea of what they had said to cause it. He had taken them quite literally.

Avoid idiomatic phrases, slang, colloquialisms, neologisms, and terms which have recently become fashionable. Remember that the respondent has probably learned English first from a book or teacher. Words which are meant to be informal and friendly may only be perplexing, and the respondent's good intentions uninterpretable. Formal, but simple, is the better choice.

Choose vocabulary which is high in frequency of use. Avoid abstruse, unusual words; avoid metaphors; avoid words with more than one meaning. If the meaning varies with the context, add other words and phrases as necessary to make the intended meaning clear.

Keep to simple syntax without embedded meanings. These techniques have been described in Chapter 4 as general principles, but they are of particular importance for respondents with language problems of any kind.

There is no short cut or rule of thumb which will enable an interviewer to become familiar with the social demands of all other cultures. The interviewer must learn them by studying the cultures from which the respondent comes. By reading, and talking to members of the culture and participating in social interaction with people of the group, many limitations will gradually be overcome. The difference between this level of knowledge and that which comes from membership of the culture is very great, and the interviewer should not assume that this degree of familiarity with the norms of the culture is a guarantee of acceptance. It is well not to forget that the respondent may perceive the interviewer's knowledge as merely superficial. The interviewer must also beware of appearing to have an identification with the culture which he really does not possess.

Non-verbal aspects of communication become more important when the skills of verbal communication are limited. The problem in interviewing across cultures is that the more subtle non-verbal cues may not have the same function in the culture of the respondent as they do in the culture of the interviewer. One example is the distance between persons which is accept-

able in various social contexts. Many studies (e.g. Sommer, 1969; Hall, 1966) have shown that in some cultures people come much closer together for normal social intercourse than they do in others. Hall's studies found that Italians took positions closest together, followed by the French, while the English remained furthest apart. Other studies have shown Turkish and Arab males to take closer positions to each other than do American males. The common practice of many Asian and Middle Eastern cultures of men holding hands as they walk together down the street has been greeted with some amazement by Australian males of Anglo-Saxon background.

If an interviewer comes too close, it may be interpreted as an invasion of personal space, and hence an invasion of privacy. If he remains too far distant it can be interpreted as indicating aloofness. Other behaviour which can lead to rejection of the interviewer by a respondent of a different cultural background is the use of more direct eye gaze than is customary, and touching the person, particularly on the head. There are wide cultural variations in regard to what types of behaviour are tolerated and what mistakes become moral improprieties rather than mere social ineptitude. If the interviewer is not absolutely sure that a gesture will be correctly interpreted and received as it was intended, it will be best to adopt a more formal, distant, impersonal manner rather than attempt to gain acceptance by trying to break down communication barriers through informal or more intimate approaches.

The interviewer–respondent interaction implies mutual role expectations which have to be learned. Within the one culture these expectations are more likely to be reciprocated than if one of the two is from a different culture. In the case of migrant families, the opportunities to acquire this cultural knowledge may be limited. Often the children who attend school become acculturated while their parents continue to have difficulties. Australian evidence, for example the work of Storer (1976), suggests that middle-aged non-English-speaking migrant women have the fewest opportunities to acquire the new cultural skills necessary to interact effectively with members of other cultural groups. They also have the least autonomy in regard to acting as respondents in interviews. In many cases the interview can only be conducted provided the husband remains

present. Such women also frequently have to use their children as interpreters, a situation which is satisfactory to no-one — interviewer, mother, or child.

Refugees and migrant families who have only just arrived in Australia present special problems for interviewers. It is important to remember that many refugees and people coming into a new country for political reasons may be extremely fearful of officials and 'papers'. Their anxiety, lack of knowledge of these expectations, their dependent status as immigrants, and language difficulties have the effect of exaggerating the culturally based differences, so that the interviewer is forced to proceed without being sure that the questioning is received as it was intended. The possible confounding of language problems with conceptual problems cannot be overlooked in this situation.

In all, interviewing people of different cultural and ethnic background should be approached with great care. Every possible step should be taken to ensure through the use of feedback and other checks that the purpose of the interview is being achieved. One must assume that the level of anxiety which accompanies any situation lacking cognitive clarity will be higher than usual and that the usual tactics employed to allay that anxiety may not be successful.

Respect for the culture of the other is an essential ingredient to cross-cultural interviewing. It does not mean that the interviewer will necessarily agree with every aspect of the other's culture, but it does mean that a sincere attempt to gain an understanding of the respondent's point of view will be made and that the respondent will be treated as an individual instead of only as a representative of his culture or ethnic group.

Interviewing by Telephone

Many interviewers find telephone interviewing a problem because they find it such a different experience from face-to-face interviewing. They miss the feedback which they usually obtain from posture, gestures, and facial expressions. It is interesting to observe how most people use these non-verbal aspects of communication when they speak on the telephone even though they are well aware that they cannot be seen by

the person at the other end. In interviewing over the telephone the interviewer cannot make use of these cues but must rely entirely on the verbal mode.

If the respondent does not already know the interviewer personally, and this is usually the case, the additional information which respondents use to form judgements about the interviewer in the first few moments of an interview is missing. Physical appearance, apparent age, dress, mode of movement, and even skin colour, all of which commonly provide information, cannot be used as cues. Many people build up an image of the person at the other end, and speak in ways appropriate to that image. A familiar illustration of this tendency is the way people form an image of what a popular radio announcer is like and sometimes experience disappointment when they see the real person. Although in some cases this may prevent prejudice from affecting the initial relationship between interviewer and respondent because unfavourable stereotypes are not invoked, a greater burden is placed upon the voice to convey the desired concepts of the purpose of the interview and the person of the interviewer. In the absence of the non-verbal cues, people make judgements about a variety of personal characteristics on the basis of voice quality alone. Pitch, speed, and accent are all used. There is much research to illustrate this point, for example the work of Giles and Powesland (1975) in Britain and Seggie, Fulmizi, and Stewart (1982) in Australia. In Seggie *et al.*'s study the subjects judged a person with a 'broad' accent to be less suitable for a white collar position, and to have different personal qualities from a person with an 'educated' accent, a finding of some relevance to job interviewing by telephone.

Aids to Telephone Interviewing

Although it is possible for the interviewer to have a written schedule at hand, there is a greater than usual strain on auditory processing for both interviewer and respondent. The respondent usually does not have the advantage of having the question in written form. It is important, therefore, to ease the strain on memory and auditory processing.

Assist the respondent to establish cognitive structure as soon

as possible. Identify yourself at the outset. Explain clearly the purpose of the interview. Do not proceed until quite sure that the purpose is understood and accepted.

Reduce memory load by keeping the questions short. Proceed in small steps, one question at a time. Avoid double-barrelled questions.

Prepare an interview schedule with a relatively simple structure. Use a sequential rather than a complex branching structure.

To aid in keeping track of responses, take notes while the respondent is speaking. Make sure that there is sufficient space to take all written materials, paper, etc. and place a sound-absorbent cloth or paper on the desk to reduce the distraction of rustling papers.

Give feedback. Avoid long pauses. Without visual feedback the respondent has no way of knowing that the interviewer is still listening or that the telephone is still working. If the respondent is at all anxious the delay will seem much longer than it actually is. 'Uh hm' or 'mm' may be all that is necessary to indicate that the interviewer is still there.

Pay attention to articulation to reduce misunderstanding and having to repeat oneself frequently. Speak clearly, and do not 'trail off' so that the end of the question fades away. Keep the voice low-pitched. Check with a trial run to find the best position and distance from the mouthpiece for you. Ask a friend or colleague to take the call and report back to you the effects of different positions until you establish the optimum position. Remember to include the papers and recording in the trial.

Practise to increase your memory for auditory messages. Gradually increase the length of the information to be remembered.

If you are conducting a group interview by telephone, plan ahead so that all participants have an opportunity to speak. Work out a number of cues to indicate to each participant when it is to be their turn to speak. Introduce the speakers. If the voices have no obviously distinguishing features, for example one female in a group of otherwise all male voices, have each person identify himself or herself before speaking on each occasion. Do not allow members of the group to talk over the top of the speaker who has the turn. Keep to the order, strictly one at a time. The order can be prearranged if necessary.

If the group is interviewing a single respondent, as in the case of a job interview, stress to the panel that it is the respondent with whom they should interact, not each other. Because of the immediacy of their physical presence, and the availability of non-verbal cues from each other, it is very easy for the group to fall into the trap of talking more to themselves than to the respondent they are supposed to be interviewing.

Suggestions for Further Reading

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CHAPTER 7

Interviews as Research Tools

When the interview is used to gather information for research, the researcher must be very concerned with how reliable the data obtained will be. Psychologists will be especially concerned with how interview data compare with data obtained from the use of questionnaires and psychological tests or scales.

As a research tool interviewing is available to anyone who wishes to use it. There are no restrictions as there are in the case of psychological tests. Interviews are attractive to many researchers who do not have access to such instruments. Sociologists, social workers, welfare workers, anthropologists, and health researchers are all frequent users of the interview as a research tool for data gathering.

Many of these research workers prefer to use interviewing because their questions can be tailored to the respondents as well as to the topic. The freedom to adjust the form of questioning to take account of previous answers offers many advantages in that it prevents the interviewer from asking questions which are inappropriate and allows the interviewer to evolve a style which takes account of individual differences in respondents.

Herein lie also the problems of using the interview as a research tool. How is it possible to be flexible without becoming subjective? Is it possible to take account of individual response styles without biasing the data? What effect does the presence of the interviewer have on the information obtained? What are the effects of the different ways of recording the responses? All these questions are important issues which the research worker who uses the interview as the principal source of data must resolve. The general issues have been discussed in Chapter 2. Here we will be concerned with how to improve the reliability and usability of the data and how to deal with the data we have obtained.

Scoring, Coding, and Analysis of Interview Data

Methods of scoring include direct scoring during the course of the interview, scoring from recall, scoring from tape recording, scoring from film or video recording, and combinations of these methods. In all cases it is necessary to prepare a set of response categories for every question or set of questions. These response categories are then given code numbers, which then become the data sets used in the analysis. Preparing the coding categories is an integral part of the research interview. They should be determined at the time of constructing the interview schedule, and tested by pilot studies before the data gathering commences. They should be able theoretically to cover all possible response types. In practice there may not be any entries in some categories.

In research interviewing the coding categories will be determined so as to reflect the hypotheses being tested. The responses can be treated separately or collected into groups of related responses. Thus, depending on the content of the interview, responses can be treated additively and brought together to produce a total score, or the individual responses within the groups can be regarded as not being independent of each other, and in this case the total group score would be used. The decision depends on the independence of the response categories. Coding categories must not overlap.

Test the coding categories beforehand. Allow for unforeseen responses which do not fit readily into the coding categories, but do not change the system in the middle of the interviewing program. Coding categories must account for the whole range of possible responses (see Chapter 3).

Try to keep the coding system as simple as possible. Although more precise, extremely complicated precoding may actually lead to less usable data. If the interviewer is recording the responses directly during the course of the interview, errors can easily occur, and because the interviewer has to pay so much attention to the mechanics of allocating the responses to their categories rapport can be adversely affected. If the responses have to be coded from notes made after the interview, the interviewer is likely to be unable to recall the responses in sufficient detail to fill in all the data. The use of tape recordings and video records is much more amenable to complex coding systems. The problem in these cases is that so much information is generated that it is difficult to make sense of it without the further step being taken of reducing the number of response categories to something more manageable. A less ambitious approach often turns out to be more economical in the long run.

Open-ended questions are more difficult to score than questions with closed format. A content analysis approach can be used. Difficulty arises when the response is unique, that is it does not fit into a coding category, and when the response is compounded, that is it fits into more than one of the coding categories. Decisions to resolve these anomalies must be made. In the first case the category width may have to be expanded to accommodate the unique response, while in the second case there may be a need to 'undo' the response into its component parts. Whereas this compounding should have been picked up by the interviewer during the interview and the response clarified through probing, it may not have been detected and the coder will either have to choose one or other of the two categories or create a new category to accommodate the combined response. The latter course introduces the undesirable possibility of non-independent categories being confounded with independent categories in the analysis.

Whatever coding system is used, it is desirable to have more than one person rate (code) the responses. The inter-rater reliability should then be checked to see if there is agreement between the raters. A high level of correlation between raters should be obtained before analysis proceeds further.

To what extent probe questions should be scored separately is also related to the independence of response categories. If the probe is not included for all subjects as a contingency item in the interview schedule, it is wise not to score it as a separate item. The probe should clarify and explain rather than introduce new material, hence it is dependent on the preceding question.

Incomplete responses occur most frequently in open-ended questions and probes. It is better not to score these. There is the possibility of attributing an attitude to the respondent which a complete response would show to be unjustified.

Overall scoring may resolve the difficulties of coding incomplete responses and those which cover more than one coding category.

The incorporation of written multiple-choice items into the interview assists greatly in overcoming many coding problems. These items can be treated in the usual way.

Studies of the effectiveness of the interview as a research tool stress the importance of giving careful training to interviewers to increase their reliability: see, for example, the work of Belson (1981), and reviews by Cannell and Kahn (1969) and Maccoby and Maccoby (1954).

It may be concluded from these evaluation studies and reviews that the interview can have an important place in the researcher's repertoire provided that care is taken to overcome the problems of bias and codability. The skills can be learned. They require attention to the preparation of the interview schedule, sensitivity to the dynamic nature of the interaction between interviewer and respondent, care in recording the responses, and selection of appropriate methods of data analysis. If all these aspects are attended to, the use of interviewing as a research tool will not only provide usable, reliable data but also provide the interviewer with an enriching experience in human interaction.

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